



Notes
CSB



NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF THE
CONGREGATION OF PRIESTS OF
SAINT BASIL — COLLECTED BY
ROBERT JOSEPH SCOLLARD, CSB

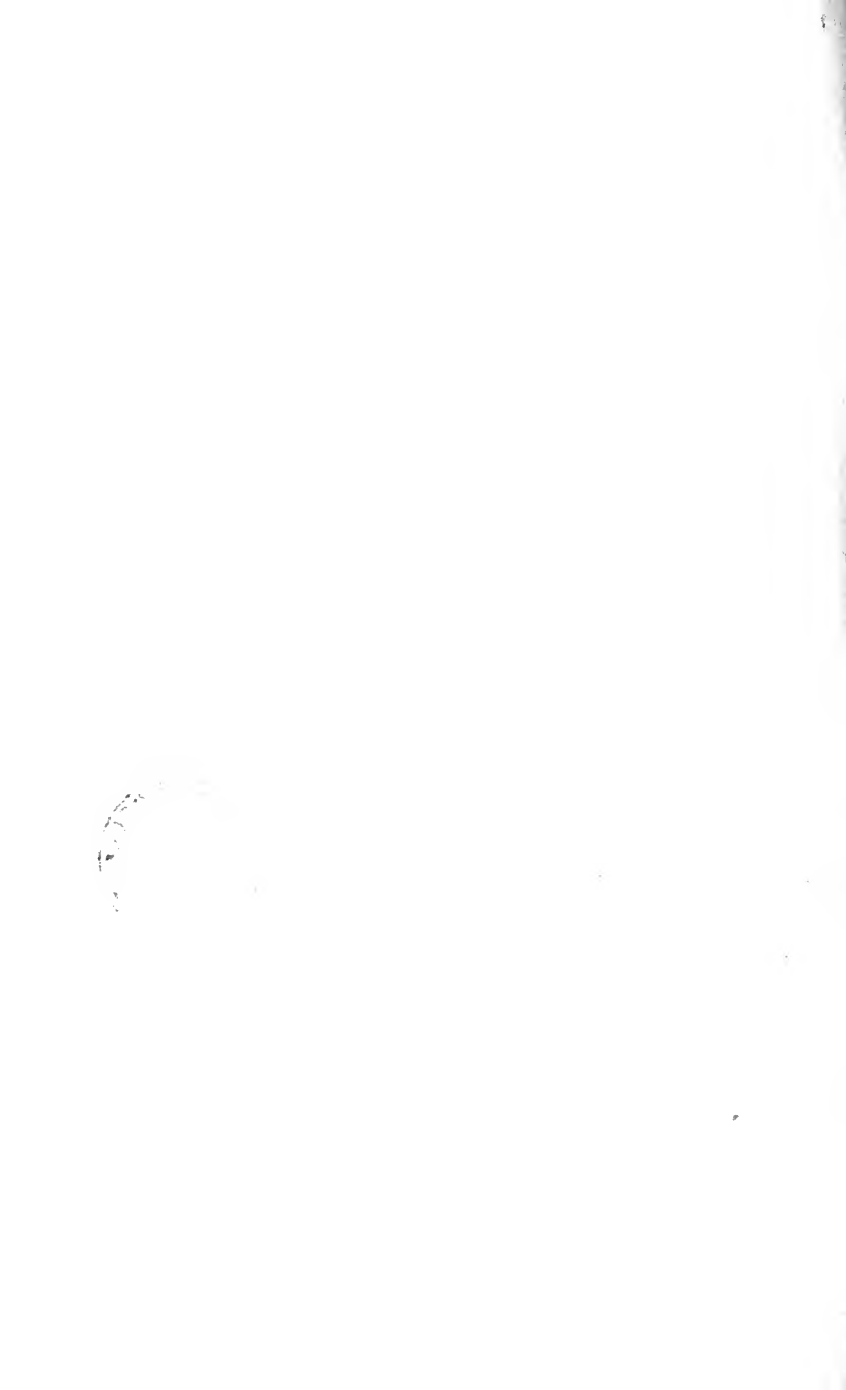
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1964



FATHER JULIEN TRACOL

1796—1885

by

Adrien Chomel, C.S.B.

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translated into English

by the Reverend

John Clifton Plomer

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abridged by

Robert J. Scollard, C.S.B.

††

Toronto

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"Cast in your lot with those confreres who esteem and love you." Letter of Father Joseph Lapierre to Father Tracol.

C O N T E N T S

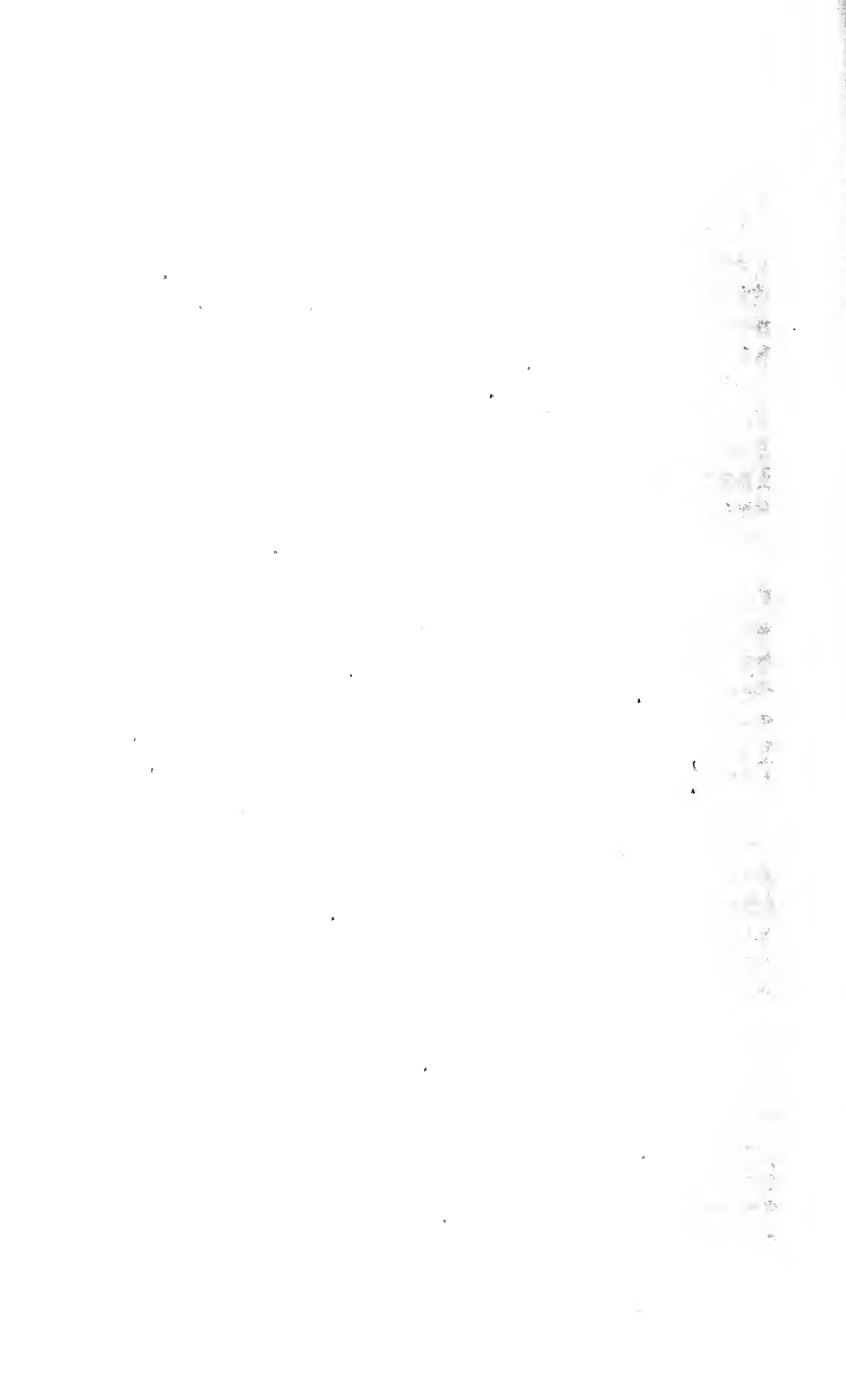
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I N T R O D U C T I O N

Father Julien Tracol was the longest lived of the ten Founders of the Congregation of Priests of St. Basil. He died at Annonay on June 3, 1885. Annonay was the place of his birth, of his education, and the scene of his priestly labors. He was never absent from his native city for more than a few weeks at a time and during the last forty years of his long life he seldom went further than an hour's walk beyond the city limits.

Father Tracol's biography was written at the end of the nineteenth century by Father Adrien Chomel, then Secretary General. Father Chomel was also a native of Annonay, born on April 27, 1848, and ordained on September 19, 1874. But it was not the desire to perpetuate the memory of a fellow townsman, nor was it the reputation for sanctity left by Father Tracol that caused him to write. He wrote because Basilians were becoming aware of the rich heritage of their past and Father Tracol's life of eighty-nine years spanned the first nine decades of Basilian history.

This life by Father Chomel was never printed. Two copies of it are preserved in the archives of the Basilian Fathers at Annonay. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Father Vic-



torin Marijon, then Provincial in America, encouraged Father Plomer to translate this biography into English. This Father Plomer did in 1904 while stationed at St. Michael's College. Father John Clifton Plomer was born in England on May 6, 1875, entered the Toronto Novitiate on August 23, 1892, and was ordained priest on September 23, 1899. In 1923 he was incardinated into the Diocese of Detroit. He died on July 16, 1926.

The present abridged biography of Father Tracol has been made from the copy of Father Plomer's manuscript translation presented to the General Archives in 1961 by Assumption University. The abridgment has been made without referring to Father Chomel's French text. Omissions within a sentence and within a paragraph have been indicated by three dots (...). Three asteriks (***) indicate the omission of one or more whole paragraphs. Words that have been supplied to provide a smooth and continuous narrative have been enclosed in carrot brackets < >.

The abridgment has reduced the biography to one third its original length. Part of this reduction comes from the omission of repetitious matter. Father Chomel grouped the principal events of Father Tracol's life, and then devoted an entire chapter to a full chronological

treatment of each of these. He admitted in his preface that "this plan has its inconveniences, for it exposes us to the danger of repetition, and obliges us to retrace our steps." However, the greater part of the reduction in length comes from omitting many of the long quotations from Father Tracol's diaries and spiritual writings. Those only have been retained which are needed for an understanding of the life of this Founder, and those which are applicable to Basilian life as it is lived today.

When Father Tracol died, his confreres were familiar with the outline of his external life and with the period of Basilian history that it spanned. Father Chomel did not "pretend to write his life", but sought only to give some insights into the spiritual life of his deceased confrere. The abridgment places less emphasis on Father Tracol's very personal interior life. It does retain all references to events in Basilian history because these are not generally known today.

Father Robert McBrady observed the sixtieth anniversary of his priestly ordination in 1934. On this occasion Father Henry Bellisle obtained from him a few pages of reminiscences which were printed in The Basilian, Volume 1 (April, 1935), pages 23-24, 34. They Begin: "I have been asked for a message

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to the Basilians of a younger school that they may be so instructed that they will never deviate from the paths of their Fathers. Perhaps the most effective way of doing this is to go back in spirit to those good old days and live again the little incidents that have helped to make our history, and to feel again the sacred atmosphere created by our ancient customs."

Father McBrady was well qualified to do this. He was one of the students of St. Michael's College who followed Father Soulerin to Annonay when he returned to France in 1865 to take up the office of Superior General. Father McBrady remained in France five years. Two of the Founders were still living. Concerning the first generation of Basilians he wrote:

"I did not know these older men very well, but from all accounts they were pious priests and good scholars. I knew Tracol. He was the last of the old guard. All looked on him as a saint, and justly so."



"If you wish your days to be always well occupied, it is necessary to follow work by prayer, and prayer by work." From a conference on obedience.

P R E F A C E

* * *

... Fruitful and powerful is the influence exercised over us by the example of our brethren in religion! We shall find no excuse if we fail to profit by it, for they followed the same rule, observed the same customs, performed the same work, and, in a word, lived the same life. We are naturally led to ask ourselves: "What they could do, why not I?" ...

* * *

It is therefore a very useful undertaking to make known the life of one of the holy priests who contributed towards laying the foundation of our little community at the cost of so much labor, so much toil and so many tears. We do not know very much about the lives of these venerable priests...

The numerous manuscripts left by the venerable confrere whome we mourn, throw a little light on this past... They supply us with edifying details about some of the first members of the community, and reveal the life of incessant toil and wonderful piety which Father Tracol shared with his confreres...

... God has permitted these manuscripts to escape the destruction which the humility of this venerable confrere promp-

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ted. His own spiritual advancement and his obedience to his superiors had induced him to write them... We imagine that he began to keep a written account of the state of his conscience while he was in the Jesuit Novitiate ... We have certainly found notes and resolutions written during retreats, and of private rules of earlier date, but nothing in the nature of a regular diary, though we have been able to follow the state of his soul from week to week and even day to day for more than forty years after this date. The first volume of this diary was written in 1826 and the last brings us as far as 1873.

He wrote the details of his religious exercises, especially of his prayers and the sentiments he experienced, his resolutions, and the enlightenment and graces with which he had been favored. He did this for himself and himself alone, in order to render thanks to God for His gifts, to keep them in mind and derive profit from them for his spiritual advancement...

* * *

We do not ... pretend to write his life. Our ambition is ... to give a simple but scrupulously faithful reproduction of the principal traits and qualities which distinguished this holy priest.

To obtain this result ... we cannot do better than to put the immense amount



of material we have at hand in the best order possible, and to use his own words. "Defunctus adhuc loquitur." (Heb. xi, 4)

* * *

In order to make a good use of his notes, papers and various other writings, we have grouped the principal events of his life, the various offices he held and the virtues which he practised, and then made a study of each in its chronological order. In the first chapter, therefore, we have sketched the infancy and youth of Father Tracol, and the principal events of his exterior life. In the four next chapters we have explained his work among young people in the Confraternity of St. Aloysius, in the Community of the Providence and among souls in general. His interior life occupies five chapters, of which the first has been devoted to the methods he employed for his sanctification, and the others to the virtues which were the most predominant in him: the love of God and his neighbor, humility, obedience. In a final chapter, we have described the last twenty-five years of his life.

* * *

May Our Lord grant some fruit to this modest work which has been undertaken through obedience, and may it tend to the spiritual profit of us all.



HIS EXTERIOR LIFE

Julien Tracol was born at Annonay on June 6th, 1796, that is to say, during that period of the revolution when, after a year of comparative liberty, the clergy were once more obliged ... to observe the greatest prudence in order to perform the duties of the sacred ministry. He had the happiness ... of receiving the Sacrament of Baptism ... at the hands of Father Court ... who ... had fled to Annonay, where he had found a refuge...

His father was a respectable merchant who, while he did a very prosperous business, was not found wanting in his duty as a christian...

* * *

The young Julien's mother, Mme. Lagrange, was an intelligent and kindly woman, with a gentle but firm character... She was brought up in the reformed religion ... She was so much persuaded that she was following the right path that she believed she would be wanting in fidelity to God were she to leave it...

* * *

Having thus his father as a preceptor and his good mother as a veritable guardian angel, this little child in-



creased in age and wisdom in their sight. Though it could hardly be said that he did not like the toys and amusements of children of his own age, for he used to delight in playing with his little sister. still he did not care to leave the house to take part in the games of the children of the quarter who played in the streets. Doubtless this arose from natural timidity. There were also to be seen in him signs of that order and regularity which became one of the characteristics of his life ... as a priest. He was very careful of the little objects he made us of in his games, taking great precautions not to break or lose them...

...His worthy father ... was his only master up to the age of nine years. He was endowed with wonderful talents. So excellent was his memory and so pronounced his taste for study, that he learned to read and write, as well as to do sums in arithmetic after a very short time.

Providence ... had also provided him with a beautiful soul. Though very quick-tempered, petulant and extremely sensitive, a kind word calmed him instantly. He was so upright that he had an innate horror of lying, and he never, even at this age, permitted himself to say an untrue word...

Let us add that Julien Tracol, who was so richly gifted in soul and intelligence,



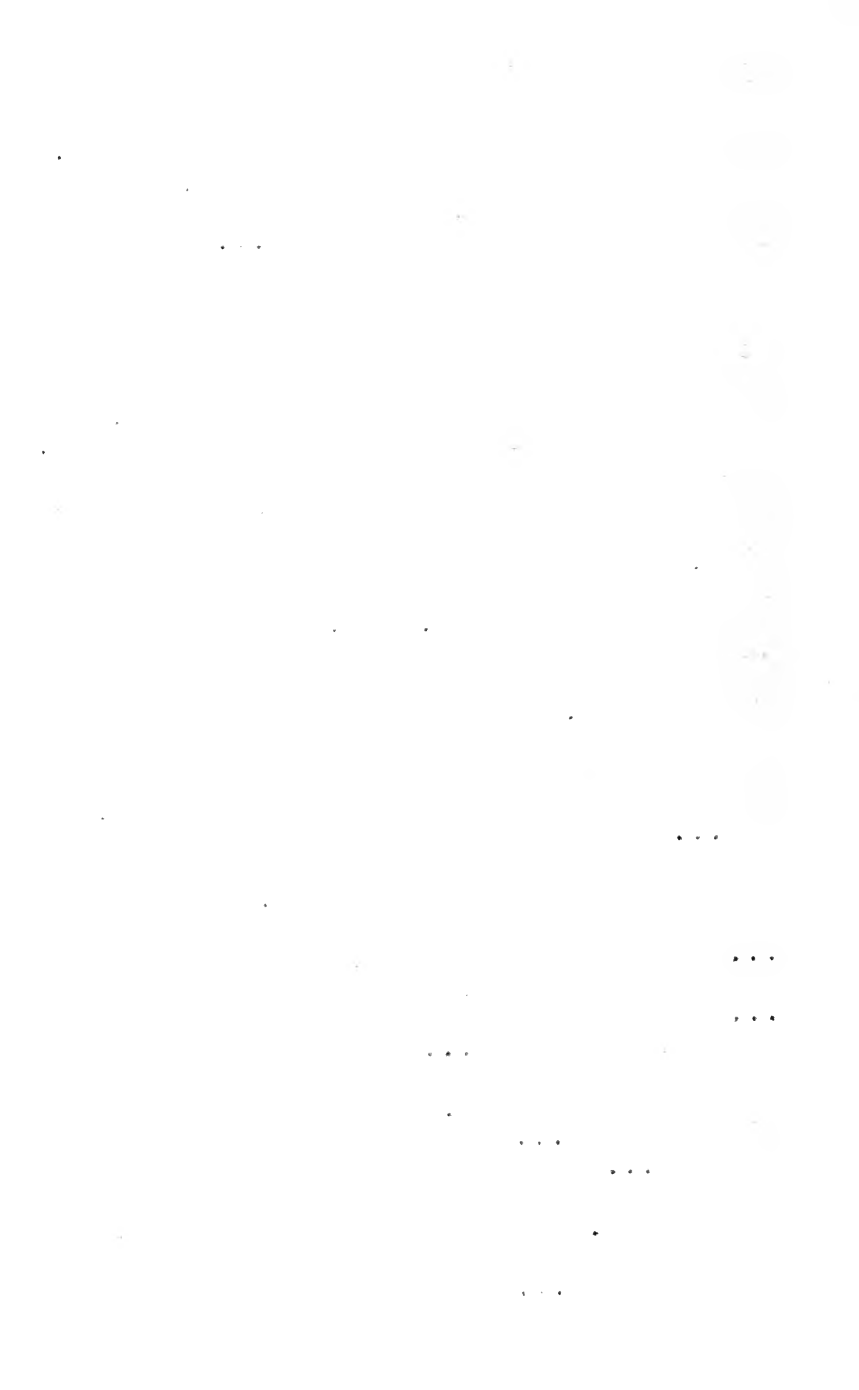
was not so favoured in his constitution. He was below the ordinary height, and though well built, was thin with a sallow and unhealthy complexion...

* * *

At this period there still lived in Annonay one of the Franciscans who had belonged to the monastery of that town, Father Charvet, a doctor of the Sorbonne. Whether it was to occupy his leisure hours with some useful labor, or to provide himself with the necessaries of life, this pious and learned religious organized a class and began to teach the Latin rudiments. Mr. Tracol thought that the best thing he could do for his son was to confide him to the care of this priest.

It was very fortunate for the child to find such a quiet and peaceful school, for...he was so timid that it was a real torture for him to be sent on a message even to one of the neighbors.

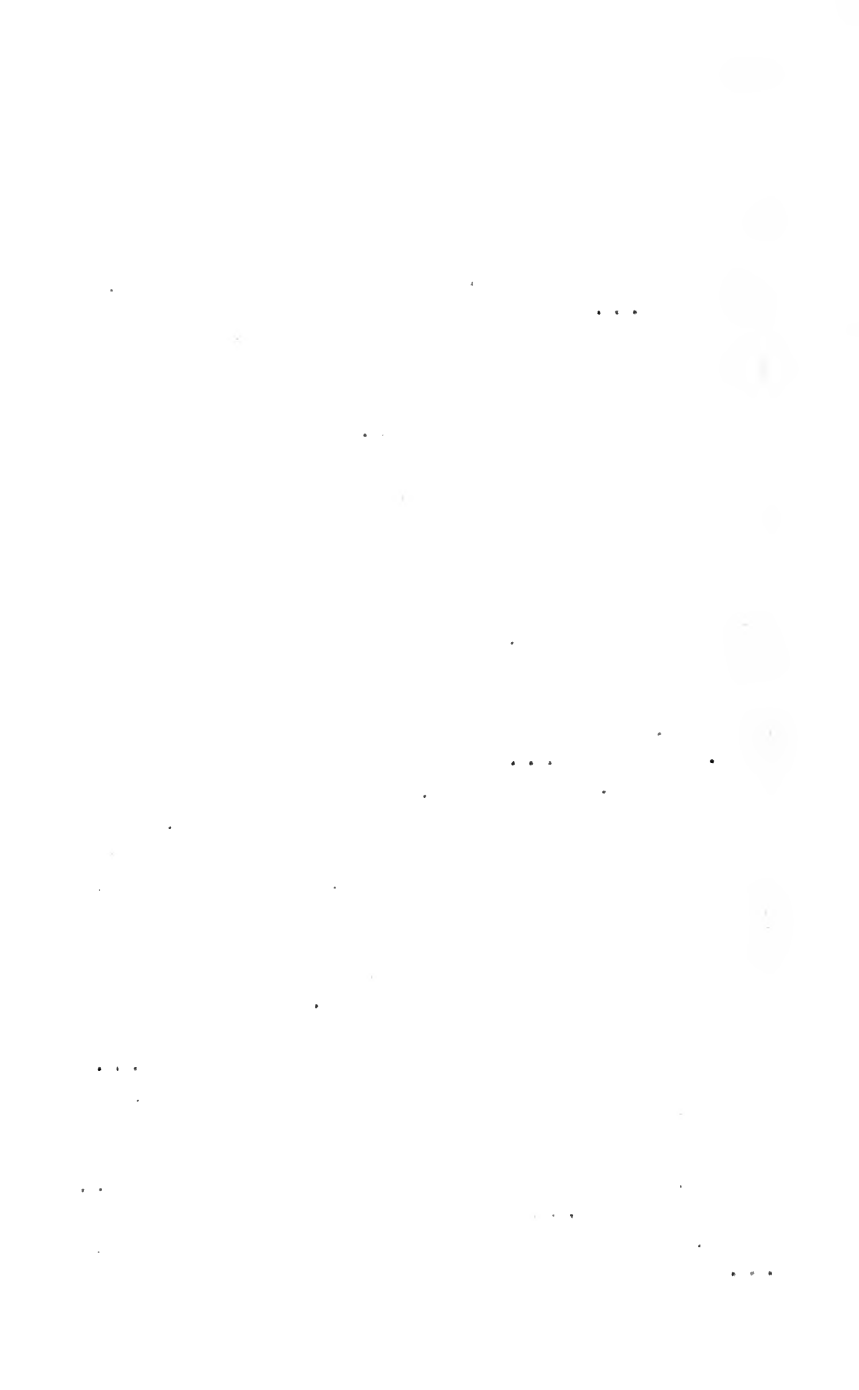
... With Father Charvet, who gave him two lessons a day, everything was homey ... On entering the house of this worthy master, he found ... <Jean> Degasche and Germain Deglesne seated on the same bench with himself. The former was a little older...and the latter two years younger...It was not long before they were united by the bonds of strong friendship. Later on they worked together in the service of God in their native town ...



The rapid progress made by young Tracol in the school of Father Charvet may be seen from the results of the examination which he passed after spending two years and a half there. His father wished, however...to provide him with a more varied and complete education; so he sent him to the school which had been founded six years before in the old Franciscan monastery...

Before going further, it will not be out of place to say a few words about the new masters who took charge of the young student, for their teaching and example has a decided influence over his mind and heart. The good priests who directed the College of Annonay were Fathers Joseph Actorie and Joseph Lapierre, who were under the guidance of Mgr. d'Aviau...the venerable Archbishop of Vienne. In 1800, they had founded a school for higher education at St. Symphorien-de-Mahun, of which Father Lapierre was parish priest, but in 1802, they yielded to the pressing solicitations of the civil and religious authorities of Annonay, and transferred their school to that town.

Father Actorie acted as<Principal> ... He was a master of sacred eloquence, and his beautiful language, rendered more impressive by the excellence of his voice, brought him many invitations ... for sermons... He was well read in history, literature, philosophy and theology ... Besides his great intellectual powers,



Father Actorie had a dignified appearance and a strength of character which inspired all with a respectful fear, but he was open and kindhearted and possessed the power of attracting all who knew him... He was a strict observer of the rule and was persevering in seeing that those under him did not transgress it. But the force which ... guided all his words and actions... was his spirit of faith...

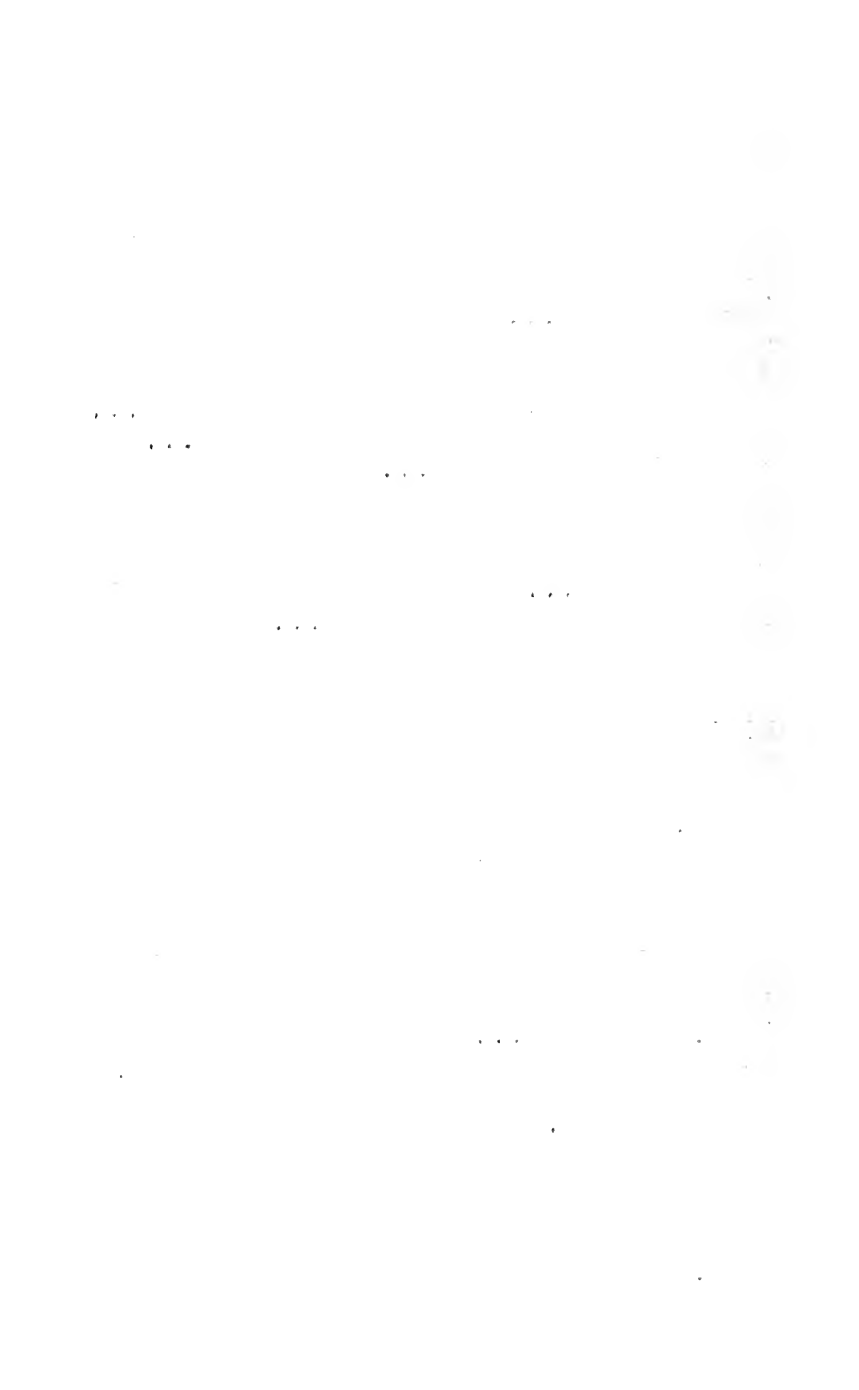
His principal assistants were Fathers Lapierre, Polly, Payan, Vallon and Tourvieille... They were brought up in the school of persecution...

* * *

Divine Providence showered down its blessings in abundance on a work undertaken through obedience, for love of souls, the service of the Church, and the glory of God. The christian families of the district hastened to entrust the education of their children to the learned, pious and devoted priests, and when young Tracol came to take his place in the fourth class, in the April of 1808, he found...two hundred and fifty boarders and day-boys in the college, and the higher classes had each about forty pupils.

* * *

Among his fellow-students was His Eminence, Cardinal Donnet, Archbishop of



Bordeaux. This illustrious prelate... told the pupils of his old college some twenty years ago how vainly he struggled to attain the first place in his class. "I worked hard, and applied myself," said he with charming good humor, "but I never rose higher than the second place. There was one of my companions who was small, very small, in fact the smallest in the class; and as long as he remained in the college he always kept the first place and we could never put him out of it... There he is", <he said> pointing to Father Tracol, who...was doing his best to hide...

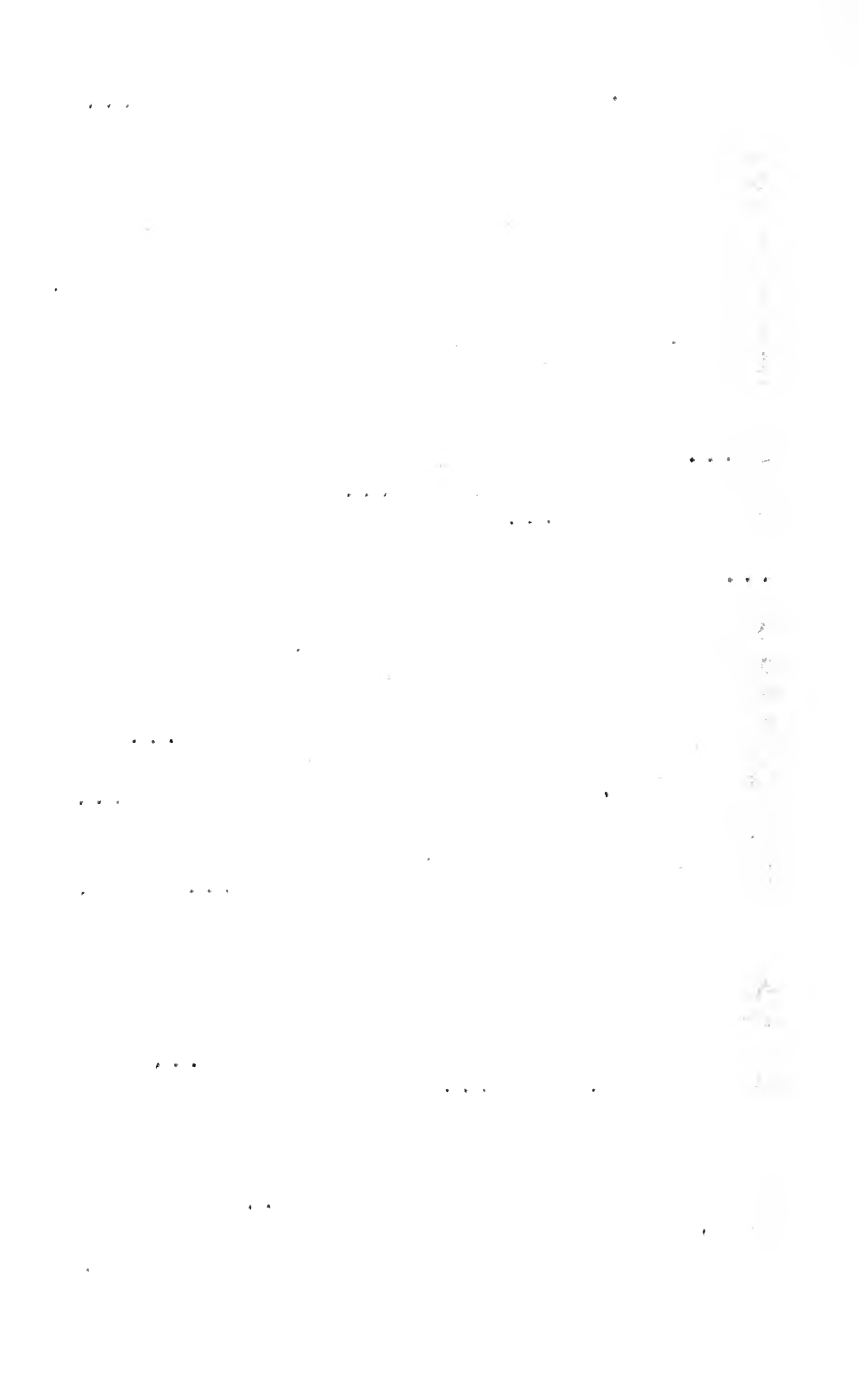
...When the celebrated Father Enfantin preached a retreat to the boys of the College of Annonay in 1809, the words of this apostolic man, who had the gift of moving the souls and touching the hearts of his listeners, stirred ... <Julien Tracol> to the very depths of his being. It was his first retreat... It was also intimately connected with his First Communion, for it was the immediate preparation for that...event.

* * *

We have every reason to believe that the origin of his vocation to the priesthood may be traced to this date ... August 2nd, 1809...

* * *

He observed the anniversary...every year, as well as that of the day on which he was confirmed (July 23, 1810)...



Soon after his First Communion, he became one of the first members of the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin which had been established in the college, and he joined the Third Order of the Most Holy Trinity when the nuns of that order came to take charge of the hospital in 1810...The number of his prizes increased each year...and at the end of belles-lettres in 1810 and rhetoric in 1811, he had the much coveted honor of reading a paper at the solemn distribution of prizes...

* * *

At the end of his rhetoric year, he thought that it was his duty to warn his parents of his desire to enter the ecclesiastical state. His mother, who was always very reserved in religious matters, offered no objections... but the same cannot be said of his father. It was not that Mr. Tracol disliked the idea of his son's consecrating himself to the service of God... but ... <he> had only one son. He had hoped to place him in business with himself... Moreover, his son was very young... Accordingly, without exactly opposing the boy and giving him a flat refusal, he endeavored to gain time, to keep him at home and employ him in his business.

The respect which Julien had for his father...led him to submit, though at the cost of some interior pain; so he said nothing, and worked as hard as he

could in his father's store. Still, he never abandoned his intention...

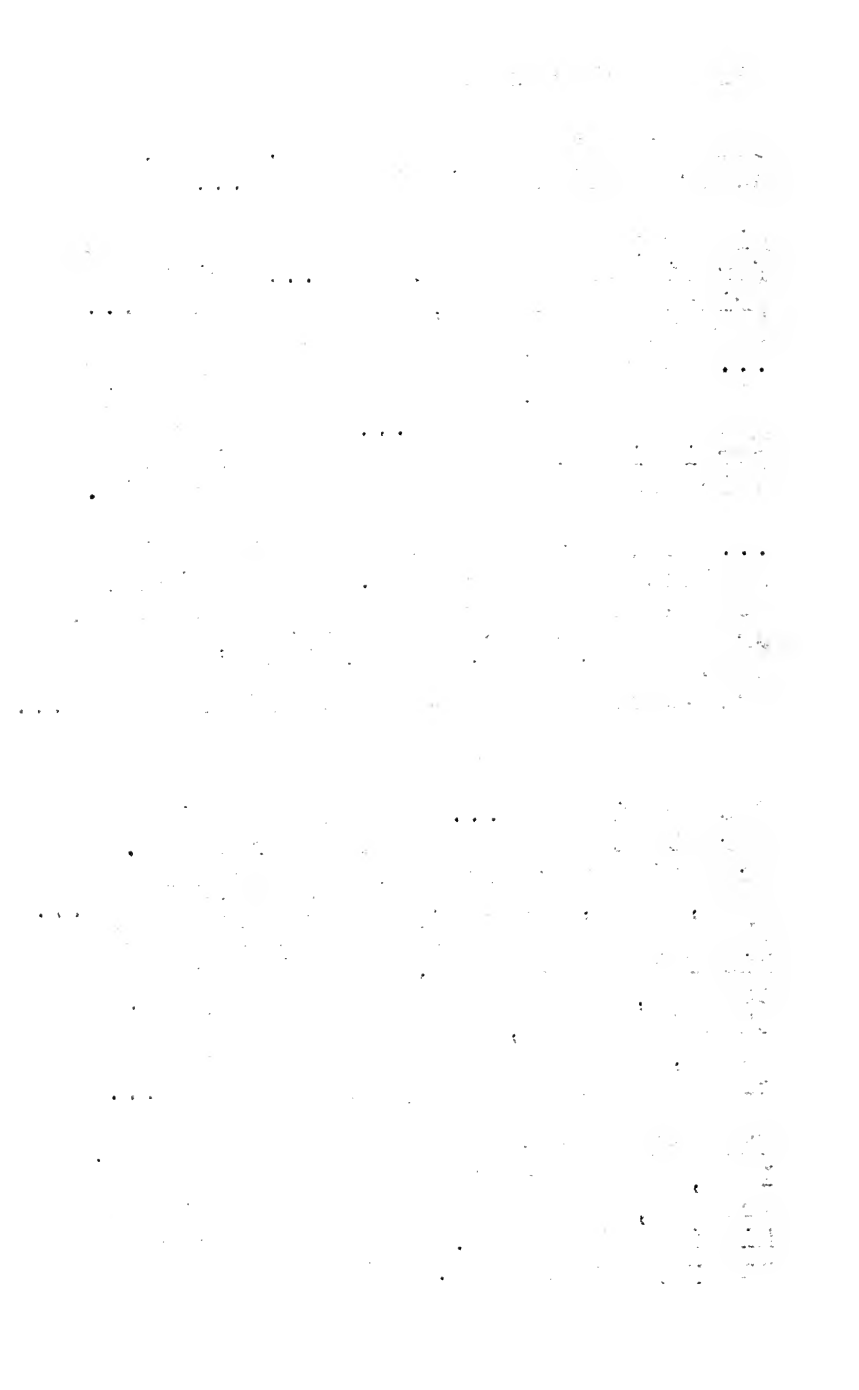
His prayer was heard after he had waited for eighteen months. The...parish priests of Annonay, Father Picansel... thought the test had lasted long enough ...After talking the matter over several times with Mr. Tracol, the worthy priest gained his point and...<Julien> received permission to follow the vocation to which the grace of God had called him.

...But there was yet a question which remained to be settled. Was Julien to be sent to the Grand Seminary at Mende, or to Father Vernet at Viviers, or was he to continue his studies for the priesthood at the College <of Annonay>?...

* * *

Father Picansel...prevailed on his parents to leave him at the college. He accordingly returned there on April 26th, 1813, as a student in philosophy... Though he entered six months later than his fellow students, he easily caught up to them, and at the end of the year, that is to say, after four months of study, he took the first place in his class as he had always done before...

When classes reopened on November 1st, 1813, he began his theology under Father Actorie, a master well able to direct him in this study. This was a very happy year for him. His work was to

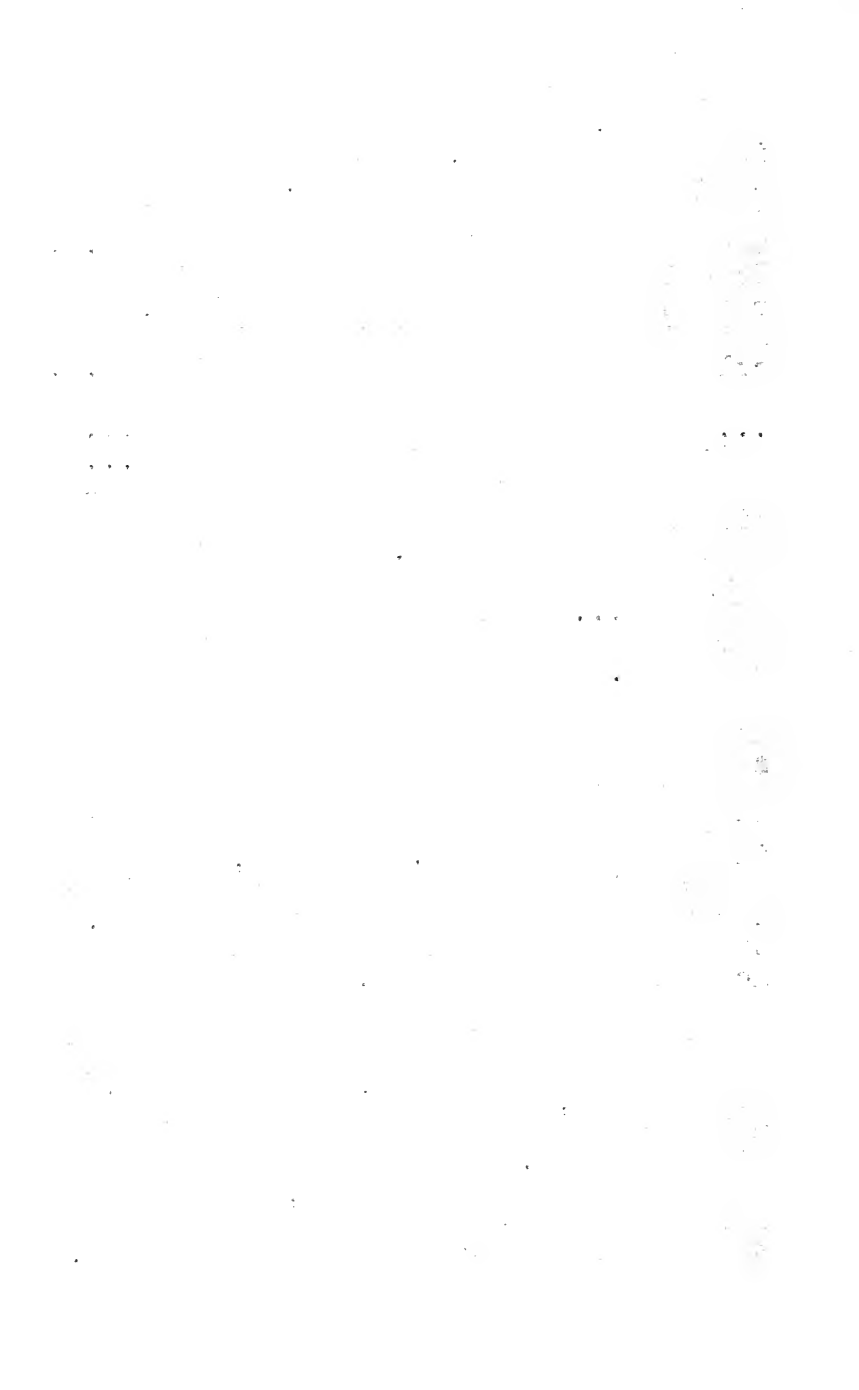


watch the boys during recreation time and walks, and to prepare two classes in theology a day, so that he had time to spare for other studies. He spent a part of this perfecting himself in the art of thinking and speaking well... To this work he added the attentive reading of the lives of the saints, and made it his duty to imitate their recollection and practice their virtues...

...The great attraction he felt for... christian and sacerdotal perfection... found a wonderful stimulant in the admirable example set him by all the masters of the house. He perceived that they were priests with an ardent love of souls...absolutely devoted to their work and entirely obedient to their superior.

At least two of these priests deserve special mention here because of the powerful influence which they exercised over the sacerdotal and religious training of Julie Tracol. In fact, so great a love did he conceive for the particular virtues of Fathers Elly and Payan, that he devoted all his efforts towards acquiring them himself.

Father Jean Baptiste Polly had been endowed by God with an energetic and ardent nature, and his life was a continual struggle against the impetuosity of his character. So great was his zeal for the salvation of souls, that he devoted twenty-seven years of his life to the care of the parish of Toissieux,



at the cost of unknown mortification and fatigue. His love of study was incessant, and often caused him to forget his sleep and his meals; while his humility was so great, that he took particular pleasure in hiding his merit and his knowledge under a somewhat rustic exterior...

Father Payan, on the contrary, was gentle and quiet, and he was so naturally inclined to virtue that it seemed as if it were no effort for him to practise it...He was always considering the goodness of God, either to the boys or to his confreres. At such times, his eyes lit up, his lips wore a gentle smile and his whole person became animated...

It was to these two holy priests that Father Tracol owed the most characteristic traits which marked his life as a priest and a religious; his love of work, his profound humility, his habit of uninterrupted prayer and his interior life.

Young Tracol was not the only one who was edified by their virtues...In the same school were other young men who... were of the same age...and had the same end in view...

* * *

...Among these young and fervent professors were MM. Degasche, Fayolle, and Pages, who joined young Tracolin... a



holy friendship which lasted all the days of their lives. Father Degasche gave up teaching to work in a parish, and imitated Father Tracol with the same love in his new charge as he did when a professor, as he had done, in fact, on his bench in the college and at the school of Father Charvet.

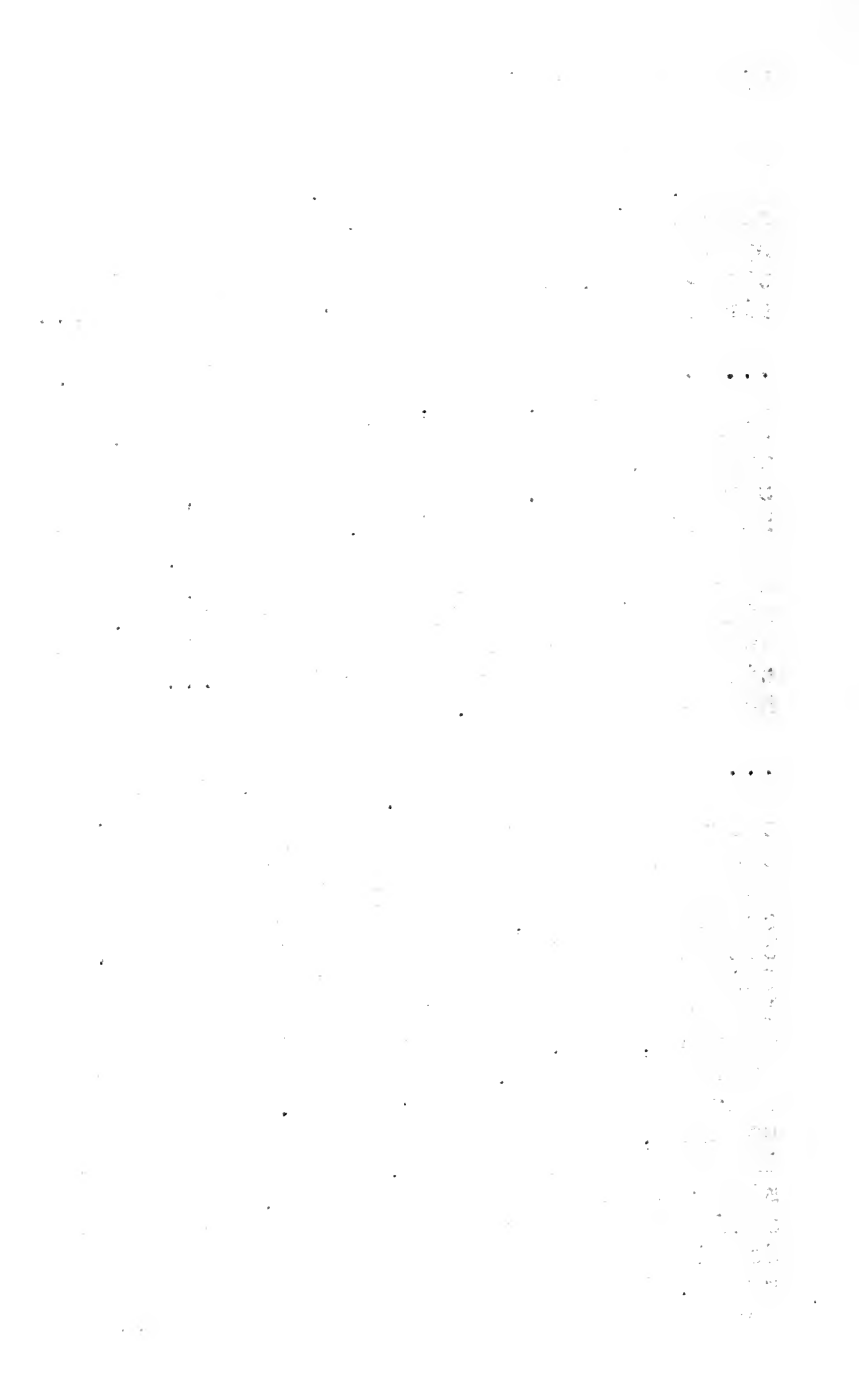
After spending some years in the college with Father Tracol, Father Fayolle was appointed superior at Maison Seule, and later on of Privas...From time to time they exchanged letters which fill us with admiration for their piety and charity...and these...strengthened the sentiments of esteem and affection which they felt for one another.

But it was Father Pages who rendered his friend a priceless service...He became his director, and, for more than thirty years, he undertook the delicate mission of guiding this privileged soul to the highest paths of perfection...All who had the good fortune to know him, remember him as a holy priest, gentle with others, but severe with himself. He felt a peculiar attraction for the rigors of penance...He did not hesitate to supplement the fatigues of his hard and difficult work by fasts, and the use of the discipline to subdue his self will. He beat it down by perfect obedience and a complete and absolute abandonment of himself into the hands of his superiors.

It was in the midst of friends such as these, men full of fervor, desirous of sanctifying their souls, and animated by a noble ambition to serve God and the Church, that Julien Tracol took his first steps in his career as a teacher...

...It was a very happy day for him when, on October 22, 1814, he for the first time put on the ecclesiastical habit, and took his place as professor of the seventh class. The thought that, though he was not yet a priest, he could nevertheless do the work of an apostle, and labor for the salvation of souls, caused his heart to overflow with happiness, and helped him to overcome the difficulties he was to encounter in the...task he had undertaken.

...The young professor had to undergo many rude experiences. At this period there was a large number of students in the college and as the old Franciscan Monastery was not roomy enough to accommodate them, some dormitories had been opened in the neighboring houses. This awkward arrangement increased the labor and difficulties of the young masters, who, besides teaching four hours every day, were obliged to undertake the duties of prefects. In addition to this, they had to prepare two lessons in theology every day, and when we consider that they had no rooms, and were obliged to study at a table near a window in one of the dormitories or classrooms, it is easily understood how zealous and devoted they must have been...



* * *

He spent five years of prayer, teaching and study at the college, and advanced step by step towards that goal of his... the priesthood of Jesus Christ. He received tonsure and minor orders on March 30th, 1816, and two years later, on July 19th, 1818, he had the inestimable happiness of being admitted to major orders. It was a happy occasion for him when he took this...decisive step, which separated him forever from the world and set him apart to sing the praises of God...

...Less than a year later...on March 6th, 1819, he was ordained deacon, and on the 28th of the same month he was made a priest of Jesus Christ...

On that occasion, his soul overflowed with grace...He knew perfectly what was essential to the holy priest, and with this knowledge came the desire and determination of becoming one...He felt his unworthiness so acutely, that he was never able to conquer the sensation during his entire life. The delicacy of his conscience, which had been so marked up to this time, now became extreme and verged upon the scrupulous...

...Although he felt certain that he loved God at the present moment, he dreaded the future, and the fear that he might not love God always, alone and above all things filled his heart with anguish and gave rise to many a fervent

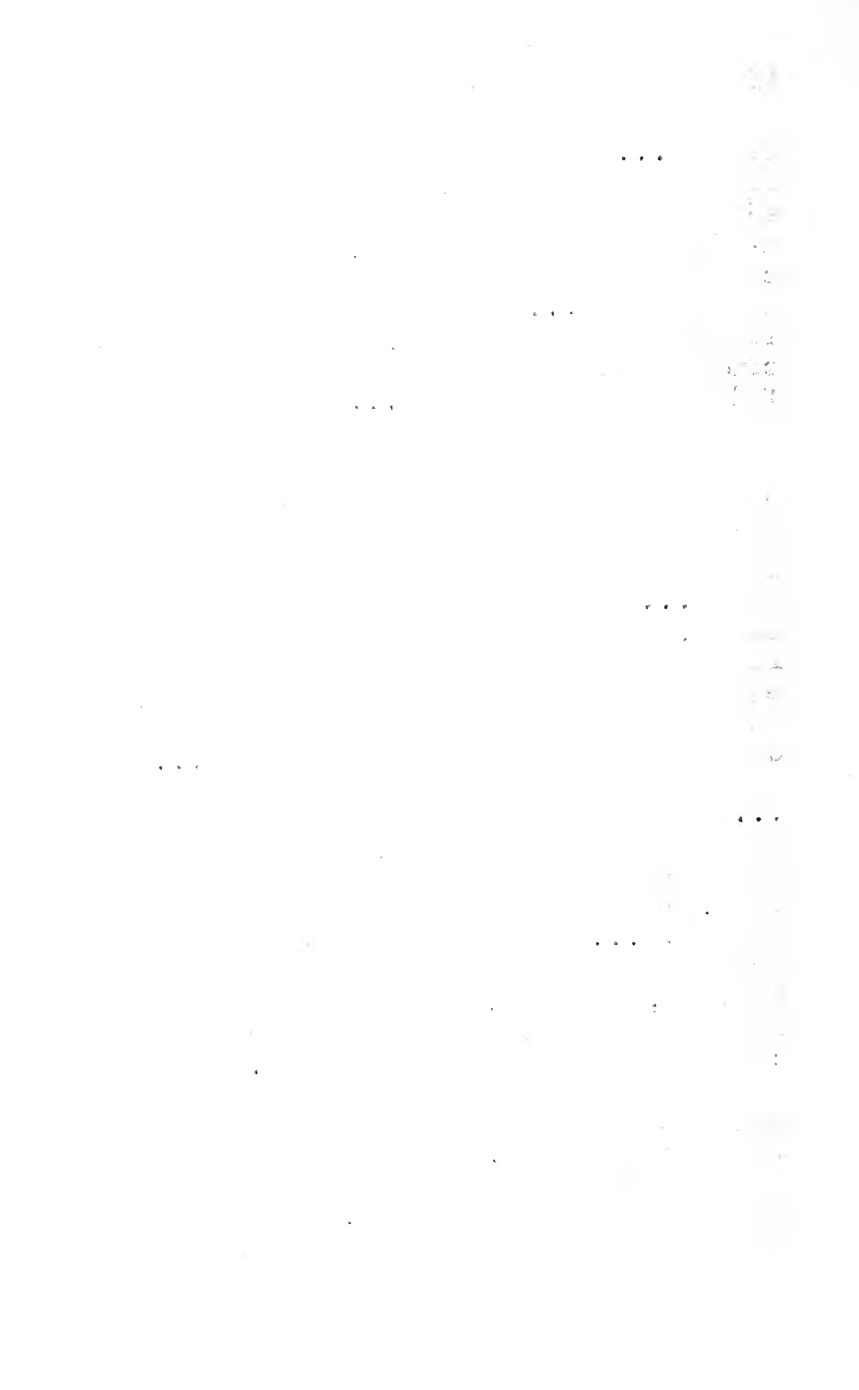
prayer...asking God to grant that he might never become, either one of those wicked priests who crucify their God again by their scandals, or one of those careless priests who do their work negligently...He begged Our Lord to fortify him with love, to make him increase and grow until he arrived at the fulness of perfection...

* * *

Though Father Tracol found it easy to raise himself up to the highest considerations which can inspire a tender piety...He could descend from this lofty plane, and knew how to regulate the least detail of his conduct so as to make it conform with his principles. He was aware that life consists only of the different actions of the day...

...From the time he entered the college as a professor in 1814, he had felt a most lively attraction for the religious life, especially for that of the Society of Jesus...but different circumstances prevented him from realizing his desires, so that, in 1819, even on the day before his ordination, he could not see his way clear towards fulfilling them.

He had had five years experience as a teacher of youth, and this occupation had afforded him the advantages of a regulated community life. It had satisfied his inclination for study, it had



given him sufficient opportunities for exercising his zeal, and he had felt the assurance that he had been of some use in advancing the cause of God. But, on the other hand, the management of children had demanded an intense application of mind which had greatly fatigued him. Moreover, he found that the laborious and consuming life of a teacher left him very little leisure and solitude...

* * *

Father Picansel...thought it...to be for the greater benefit of souls to devote him to parochial work than to allow him to continue teaching; so he resolved to make him his curate.

When Father Tracol heard of this intention, he was very much troubled... Nevertheless, after respectfully acquainting Father Picansel with his inclination for a life of prayer, retreat and withdrawal from the world, and the little desire he entertained ... for the active ministry of the parochial life, he bowed before the decision of his superiors, for they were to him as the voice of God...Thus it happened that, on September 1, 1819, ... he commenced his labors as curate in the parish of Annonay.

In Father Picansel, he found a reliable and enlightened guide on whose experience and kindness he might rely for the

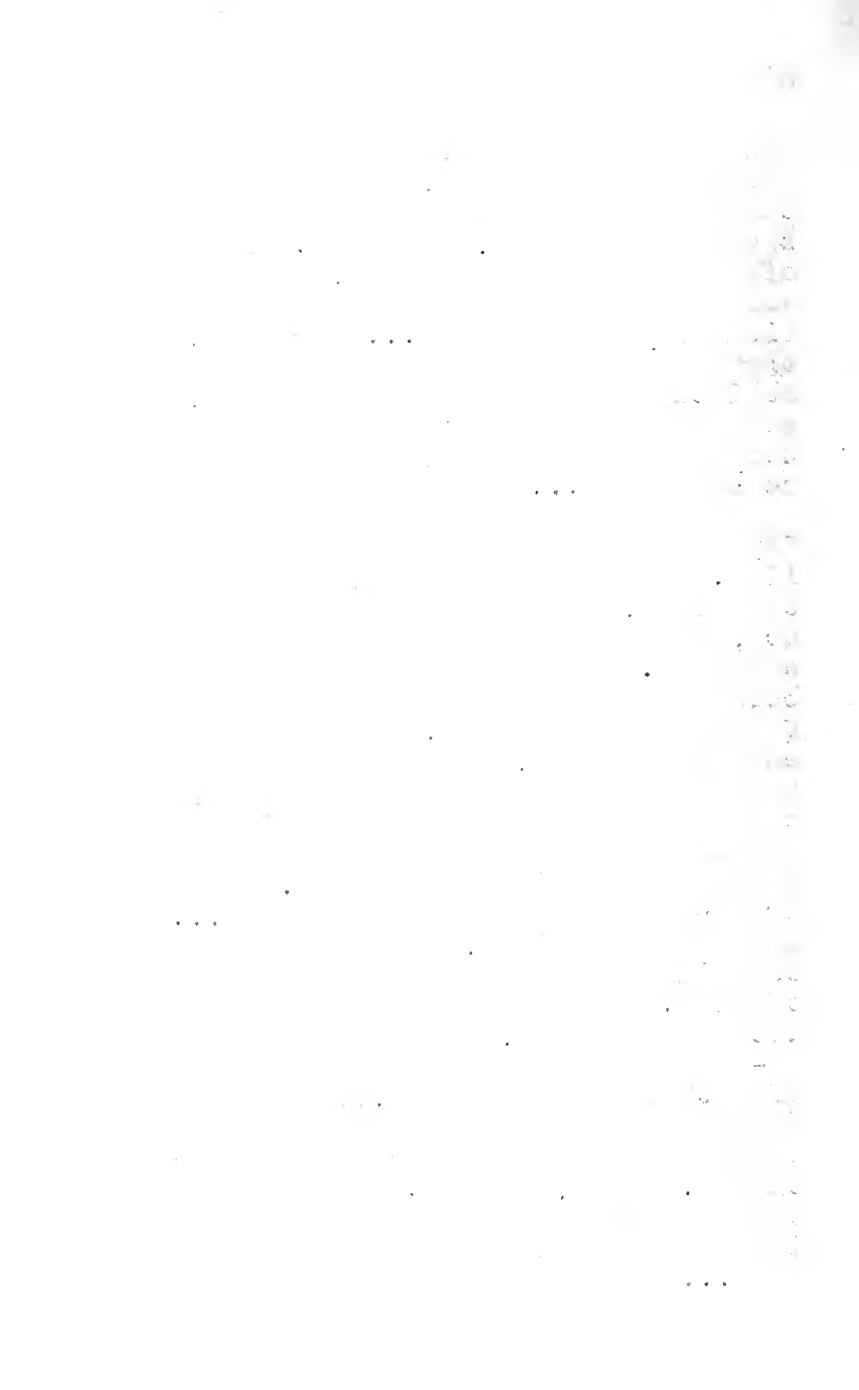
solution of his difficulties and the direction of his footsteps. Fathers Rantonnet, Fourel, and Degasches, his fellow curates, were confreres, or rather friends, who initiated him into the practical details of parish work, and exhibited an inexhaustible charity in rendering him familiar with his new life...

...He devoted himself to his new work with the greatest zeal. To see this young priest in his twenty-third year, hastening with religious enthusiasm wherever duty called him, whether to the pulpit, the confessional, to administer the sacraments, to visit the sick or make calls on his parishioners ...gave the impression that God had indeed destined him to preach the Gospel to his fellow men... This exterior activity, however, hid a secret pain... as may be seen from the following letter which he wrote to Father Picansel nine months after his appointment to his curacy.

"I have put off as long as I could, Sir, the task of informing you of my feelings ...Nevertheless, I perceive that as time goes on, in spite of my desire to render myself useful...it is impossible for me to continue as your curate any longer. I have promised obedience, Sir...and I hope with the grace of God I shall keep my word...But I should be acting against my conscience...were I to conceal from you my feelings in the matter...

"In the first place, when I entered the ecclesiastical state, I never expected that I should have to exercise the sacred ministry in a parish. I had often informed my parents, my confessor and many others that I felt no attraction toward this life... Moreover, when they told me that perhaps I might be obliged to accept such a position, I always added that my superiors would surely never treat me with such harshness as that...

"My desire was to enter the religious life. Its tranquility, seclusion from the world, its life entirely devoted to God, have always been the object of my ambition. I have devoured all the books on the religious life which have fallen into my hands. From the day I entered college, when it was decided that I should continue my studies, I took singular pleasure in making rules and constitutions for myself based on those I found in these books. It is true that I kept them very badly... I had two companions, one of whom was especially inclined towards this kind of life. We cast our eyes upon the Society of Jesus, which had just been re-established in France under the name of Fathers of the Faith... I wrote to Father Varin at Paris, but we learned that the bishop would refuse us our exeats. This, together with the fact that the Jesuits were not yet tolerated in France caused us to act a waiting part...



...One of my friends, who had evinced a great desire to enter religion, but whose vocation was of a nature somewhat different from mine, that is to say, he had a love for preaching and mission work, turned towards the new French Society of the Missions. The other had fallen sick, and his condition...seemed to prevent him from following out his former plans. Then, Sir, you caused me to be ordained that I might become your curate. On the other hand, Father Tourvieille endeavored to retain me at the college...But the class which I had been teaching for five years began to wear me, added to which, I could not get a room to myself, nor did I find life at the college sufficiently like that of a community...

"It was not long before I found out how wrongly I had acted, not exactly in leaving the college, for I had entertained that idea before my ordination... During the whole nine months of my curacy, I have not studied a word of theology, prevented by want of time, ill-health, and perhaps also by my own sloth. In fine, I feel neither the firmness, prudence, patience, knowledge nor those other qualities which are necessary in a confessor.

...The habitual infirmity which attacks my hearing, deafness and earache from time to time, frequent headaches which confine me to my bed, disorders of the

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stomach which sometimes last for months, weakness of the lungs, which makes it impossible for me to preach even an hour in the church; all are incompatible with the fatigues of the ministry.

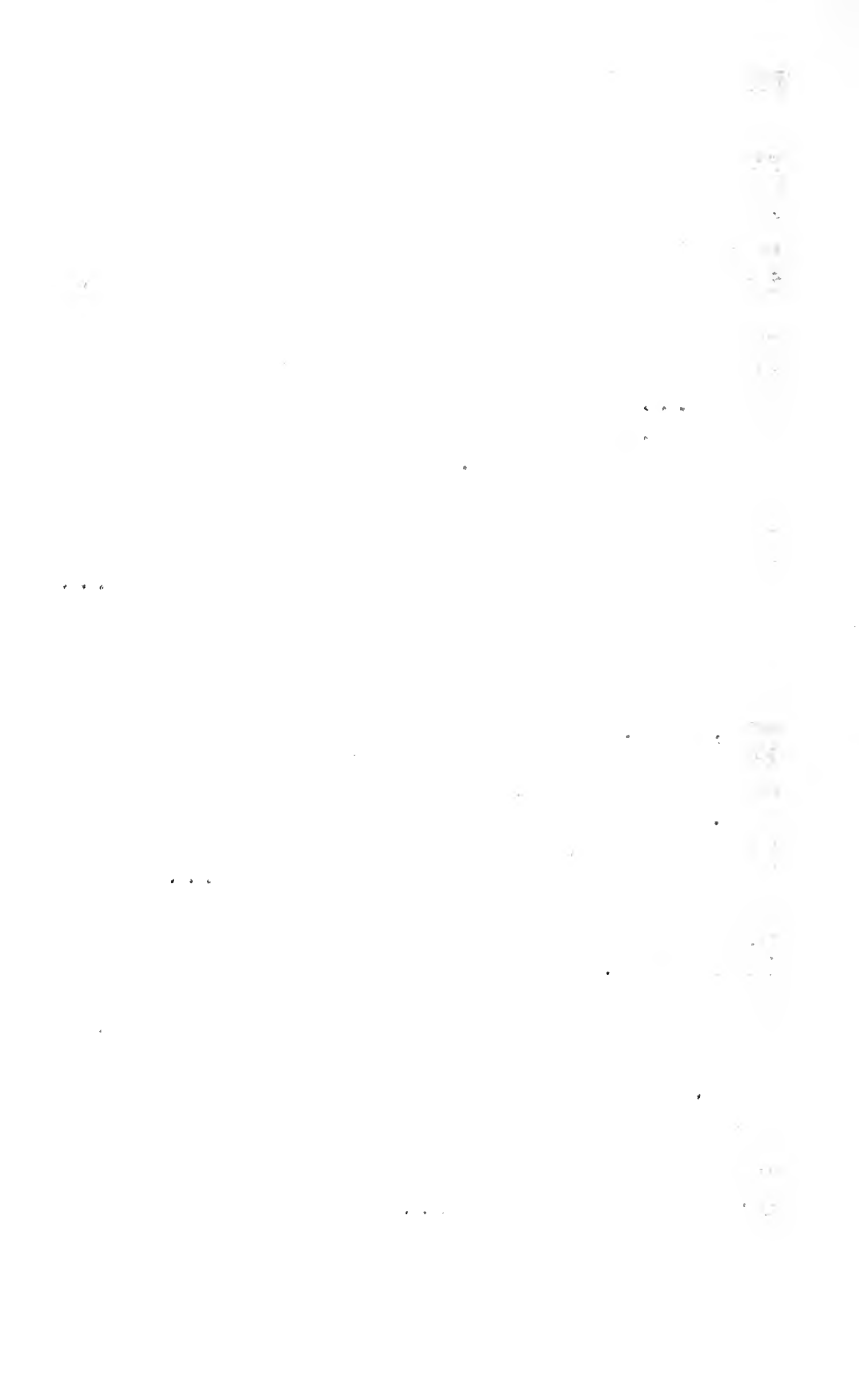
"It often happens that, when I leave the pulpit, I experience pains in the chest...When there are services in the church...I often remain quite exhausted all the afternoon. I experience a drowsiness which annoys me at work, and it is with the greatest difficulty that I manage to rise during the summer months in time to celebrate Holy Mass...

* * *

I have always put off speaking of it to you, Sir, for I see how difficult it is for you to find priests; I know how much I owe you, and I love and respect you. But if God has other prospects in view for me, you cannot take it ill if I make known to you what I have...It is true that I see many difficulties to be overcome before I can enter the religious life. The stricter orders, such as the Trappists and Carthusians are not those to which I am called by God. The Society of Jesus would suit me very well, but how can I enter it, and how can I leave the diocese? It would not be my desire to remain at the college, for I wish to belong to a congregation, or religious order...

* * *

"I believe from the bottom of my soul



that God is calling me to retirement... I have no taste for preaching, giving missions or other violent, disturbing or wearing work, nor could my health stand it. If it is true that I have some ability, I should be only too pleased to devote it to the service of God, but I beg you to let it be in some community where I may be of some use to others without being a burden to them."

* * *

This letter was no surprise to Father Picansel...He therefore promised to replace Father Tracol and on September 1, 1820, the latter went to live at his own home after a year in the ministry...

He could not at the time...enter the Society of Jesus...so he decided to accept the position of teacher of third year at the college offered him by Father Actorie, who was only too glad to bring him back...He was moreover, given a room, an advantage which he had not formerly enjoyed...where he might devote himself to work and prayer during his free time in accordance with a rule of life which he had mapped out for himself...

...His piety found fresh nourishment in an employment which was at this time entrusted to him...and he conducted himself in it for forty-five years in a manner that was truly worthy of...admiration...We refer to his care of the sacristy...

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His zeal and charity for his fellow men was exercised by the chaplaincy of the hospital, which he retained from 1820 to 1825. He went there every day to say Holy Mass, and every Sunday he gave an instruction to the poor inmates...

* * *

But the absorbing occupation of teaching and of outside work...could not make the young priest forget the end he had in view when he gave up parish work...his endeavor to enter religious life. He applied himself, therefore, to practice with exactitude and with the spirit of faith, the rule which the diocesan authorities had drawn up for the professors of the College of Annonay. To this end, he copied it out, and added notes which indicated in detail, article by article, the means of observing each in the best possible way...

We select a portion of these commentaries dealing with the more general points of the rule...

"I am going to meditate upon our holy rule in Thy presence, O my God. Help me to understand well the extent of the duties it imposes on me...grant me the grace of never deviating from them without a lawful reason.

"The professors of the college do not form a congregation or a special body, says our rule: I cannot, however, banish

the consoling thought that I shall one day have the happiness of being bound by the religious vows... I will try to have a high regard for this holy rule. Whether it concerns time, place or manner, I will strive to observe every item of it with purity of intention, courage, promptness, joy and zeal, and will excuse myself from it only when I have permission...

* * *

Exercises of piety:-

"I will rise half an hour before the others on Sundays and Thursdays in order to make my meditation, since my work at the hospital prevents me from assisting at the common meditation on these days. I should look upon meditation as an exercise worthy of the angels, and I will try...to form some resolution which shall be such as may be carried out on the very day of the meditation...

...I will be faithful to the exercises which are performed in common and will never miss any of them: Vespers at one, Particular Examen at a quarter past one, Matins at five, Spiritual Reading at half past six. During the recreation after supper, I will follow the example of my confreres, who spend a quarter of an hour in adoration before the Most Holy Sacrament, and I will employ half of this time in examining my conscience on my actions during the day.

Work:-

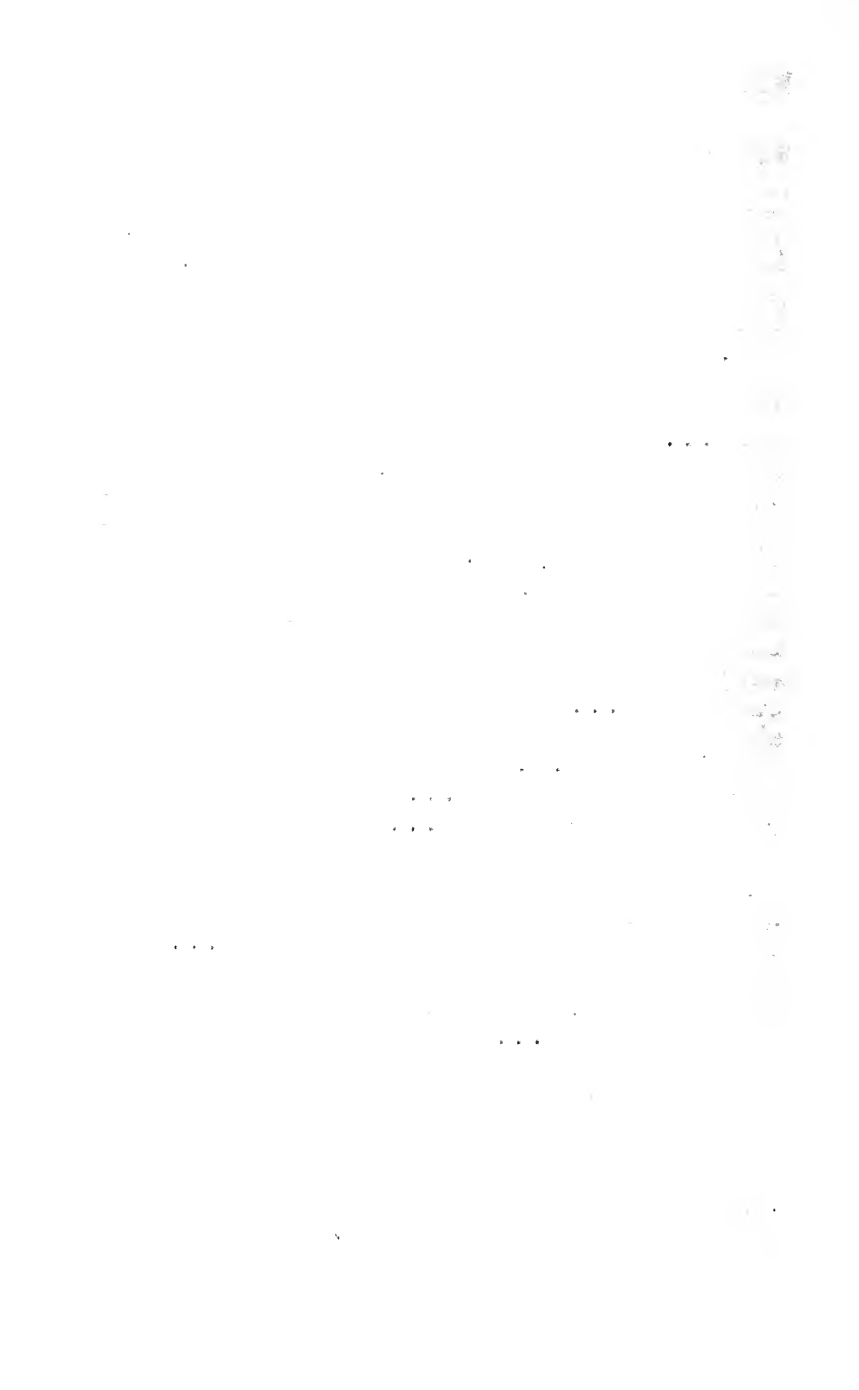
"Preparation for class is an act of justice which we owe our pupils, etc.: in accordance with this principle, the preparation of my class work should take precedence of all my other studies, etc.

"I should devote all the study hours to work...Work is much more necessary for us than for our pupils, and the rule tells us that we are assembled in community in order to lead a life of continual occupation. In accordance with this principle, I will do my utmost to employ all my time usefully, accepting work as a penance in reparation for so many days, hours and moments which have been lost...I will read at least one chapter of Holy Scripture before the evening class...I will perform this exercise on my knees...On Sundays I will read three chapters...

"As to my share of the work in the sacristy, I will spend my time on Saturdays and the eves of the feasts...and I will do this work particularly during recreations, unless, indeed, I should not have time...

Regularity:-

"When the law permits of no exceptions, we must not except ourselves; the rule tells us that we must drop everything at the sound of the bell. How much have I not to reproach myself with on



this subject?...How many acts of obedience, of subjection of the will, etc., might I not have practiced by the faithful observance of this rule...I should have...imitated St. Aloysius Gonzaga, who felt a particular attraction for fidelity in little things...

Visits:-

"...What restlessness have I not brought back with me after worldly conversations; what difficulty in recollecting myself... When I go into the town, I should walk with modesty, being careful to mortify my sight...If I meet acquaintances, I will say all that etiquette requires in as few words as possible. If I pass a church, I will make it a rule to enter and adore the Most Holy Sacrament for a few moments.

"If I should happen to be seated at table with laymen, I will recollect that the same thing is happening to me as happened to the Savior of the world: Et ipsi observabant eum. For this reason I will say very little, and will carefully observe all the rules of politeness, the customs of society, and will hold myself constantly on the alert.

Discretion and charity:-

* * *

"I should be very perverse and love my holy state very little were I to have the misfortune to show dissension among

my confreres, or to give them reason to be discontented with our good superior and our holy rule. Were I to do this, I should...break the ties of charity which have always so far united the ecclesiastics of this community. I know that to live in peace with persons whose characters differ from or are often quite opposed to my own, and who have their own imperfections, I must act with exceeding prudence and discretion...Among the interesting details which may be found in our rule, is one which I must not pass over lightly... The rule to which I refer enjoins us never to turn anyone into or joke about him...There is always the greatest danger in raising a laugh at the expense of others, and it is almost impossible to avoid wounding holy charity in some degree.

* * *

This commentary on the rule was written by Father Tracol between 1820 and 1822... It...explains a step which he and a few of his young confreres took in the beginning of 1822, and of which he informs us in the following words:

"Since God, by His grace, has powerfully inspired some of us for a long time with a holy desire for perfection; and as we also feel a great desire for the religious life...we have concluded that a good method of achieving our purpose would be to set down in writing certain...resolutions...

...The associates bound themselves to perform certain special devotions, and say special prayers in addition to the religious exercises observed by the other professors. Amongst these were visits to the Blessed Sacrament at fixed hours, coulpe, direction, a monthly retreat, novenas in honor of the Blessed Sacrament, Our Lady and St. Aloysius Gonzaga, and an annual retreat of at least eight days.

The virtues which they had to acquire and perfect more than any others were regularity, obedience and charity. A penance was imposed whenever there was an infraction of the rule. This meant not only confession in the culpe, but also such light mortifications as taking no dessert, and other practices of the kind, which they had to impose on themselves. This rule depended for its value and strength entirely on the fervor and will of those who had composed it...

The members of this little society were four in number: Fathers Fayolle, Pages, Tracol and...Martinesche. The priest who consented to assume their direction in the new path which they desired to tread, was Father Payan, the man of perpetual prayer and perfect obedience.

God rewarded them even in this world for their generous efforts: for the germ of religious life planted in their souls and cultivated with so much care was not slow in developing. In that same year,

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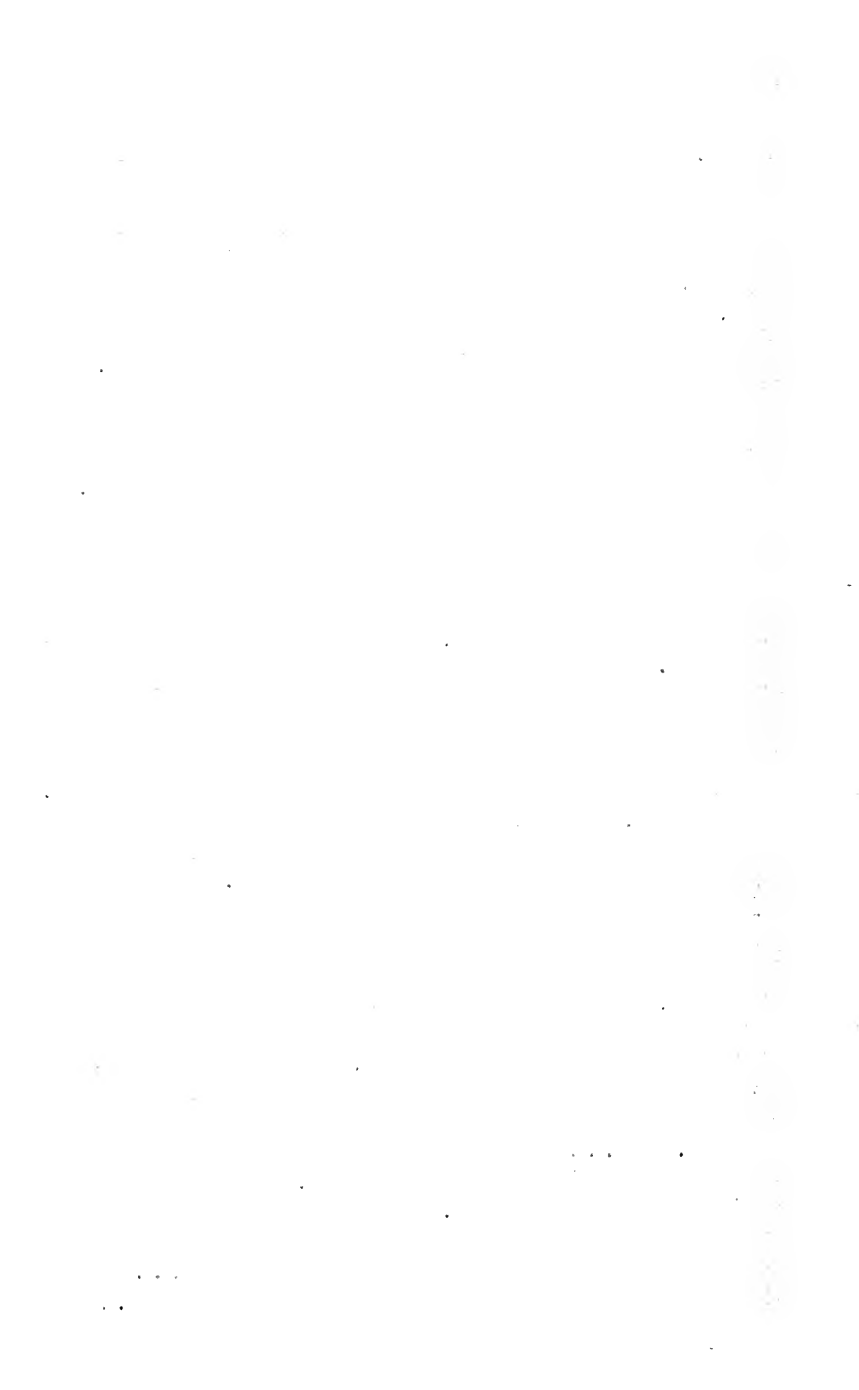
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1822, the older priests of the house, in their desire to render permanent the work which they had founded at the cost of so much labor and sacrifice, applied to the diocesan authorities for permission to band themselves together into a religious society, and submitted some rules and a constitution for approval. Their request was granted, and they suggested to the four young priests under the direction of Father Payan that they should enter the new society.

Fathers Pages, Fayolle and Martinesche hastened to express their approval of a plan which realized their desire for the religious life, but not so Father Tracol. It was not that his attraction for the higher life had at all diminished, but because, on the contrary, he wished to render the sacrifice of himself more perfect by entering the Society of Jesus. In March, 1822, he had already taken steps to carry out his intention, and matters had now come to a head. Father Picansel had granted him permission to leave the diocese in order to enter the novitiate to which the provincial had consented to admit him, but Father Tracol did not go as soon as he had received the permission, for he did not wish to embarrass Father Actorie, who had no one to take his place on the staff. He...therefore put off his departure until the vacation. But during this interval, Mgr. de la Bruniere had been appointed to the vacant see of Mende, and the provincial of the Jesuits... demanded an exeat from the postulant...

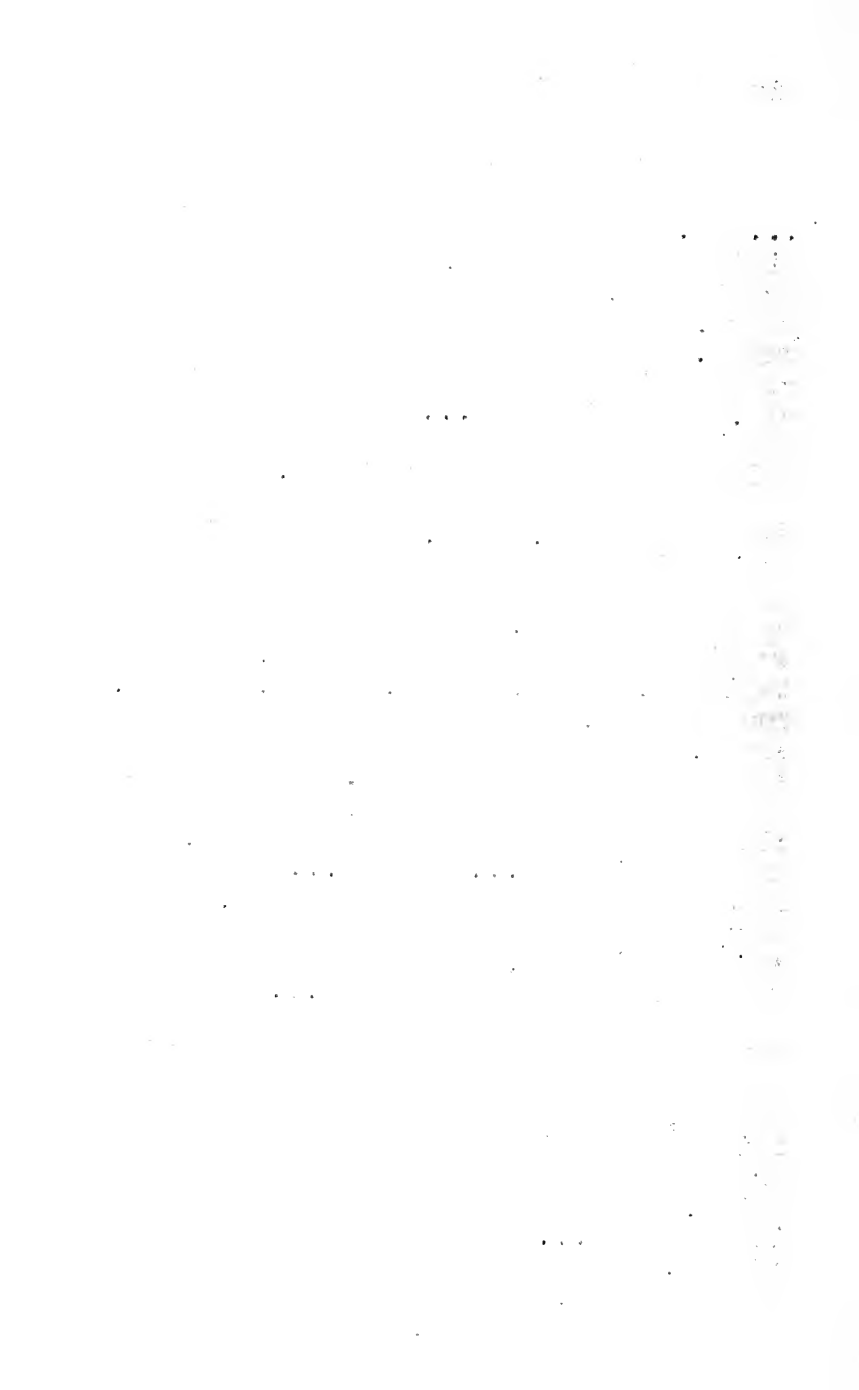


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...Mgr. de la Bruniere refused him his dimissorial letters, but promised to grant them, if after a delay of two years, he should persist in his resolution. When Father Tracol saw the realization of his plans put off in this way, he decided to...join the rest of his confreres in the little society which they proposed to found.

On November 21, 1822, he bound himself by a solemn promise to live in community under the rule and constitution approved by the ordinary. Those who made the promise at the same time were, Fathers Lapierre, Duret, Polly, Payan, Vallon, Tourvieille, Pages, Fayolle and Martin-esche, and on the same day they chose a superior and councillors. Father Lapierre was made superior, and the councillors were Fathers Duret, Polly, Payan and Tourvieille...We must...take advantage of the present opportunity, and devote a few lines to Fathers Lapierre and Tourvieille, who were the two first superiors of the community...

Father Lapierre was one of those priests who had remained faithful to their duties, and had the courage and generosity to remain with the Catholics entrusted to their care during the Revolution, though they risked their lives in doing so...In obedience to the command of Mgr. d'Aviau, he had turned his presbytery at St. Symphorien de Mahun into a house of education, and had devoted



himself entirely and without reserve to the training of youth. Extreme diffidence in of his own powers had hitherto prevented him from assuming the effective administration of the establishment, and he had wished to remain only second in command. He possessed, nevertheless, the qualities which go to make up a superior. He was well read, sound in judgment, his character was strong and firm, his prudence was admirable, and he had a wonderful knowledge of men and affairs. But he was a man of thought rather than of action...

As professor of mathematics for twenty years, Father Tourvieille had already shown a remarkable aptitude for the management of a house of education, and we find him filling the position of superior of the college in 1823. He was an indefatigable worker, and to this he owed a vast knowledge of nearly all branches of learning. As a teacher, he was noted for his firmness and his devotion to duty. He was, moreover, a theologian and a preacher... His greatest successes were...in the particularly difficult ministry of giving retreats to the clergy. In his administration, he showed great skill and prudence as a manager, and as superior of the community, he succeeded in exciting a lively spirit of piety among his confreres, together with a love for the rule, and devotion to the service of God and His Church...He did not spare his fellow

workers. But...he spared himself still less. He was endowed with a most uncommon will and energy and imposed great labor and heavy sacrifices on himself for the development and strenghtening of the work to which he had consecrated his whole life. It was during his superiorship...that it became a permanent institution.

* * *

Near the end of the scholastic year 1823-1824, Father Tracol applied once more to the superiors of the Jesuits for permission to enter their novitiate, and had the ahppiness of seeing his request favorably received. On the first of November, 1824, he went to Viviers, to which See Mgr. Molin had been appointed during the previous year, and...received from that prelate permission to leave the diocese. From Viviers he went to Avignon, where the Jesuit Fathers had founded one of their novitiates that same year, and on November 19, the day following his arrival, he wrote a letter to Father Lapierre...

"Dear Sir and Father,

"I...announce to you the fulfilment of the great project I have so long been thinking over...The bishop...gave me his blessing, assuring me at the same time that he did not wish to oppose the will of God in me...When I perceived that there was no intention of taking vows among the members of the Congregation of St. Basil, I felt myself so

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strongly inspired to take fresh steps towards entering the novitiate of the Society of Jesus, that it was impossible to resist....I am deeply grieved to think of the annoyance, and perhaps embarrassment which I shall cause you by leaving....I am penetrated with the liveliest, tenderest and most affectionate remembrance of your goodness, and that of the confreres...

I enjoyed the journey very much. I see nothing in the exercises of the novitiate which can in the least affect my health, and I even think it will be better than it was at Annonay. The Father Rector, who is kindness itself, wishes me to take a rest of a few days before commencing my retreat....I shall profit by his...charity, for it counts as a part of my novitiate. In spite of my unworthiness, I have entered the promised land for which I have longed so much...

* * *

Your most humble and obedient servant,

Priest-novice of the Society of Jesus. ^{Tracol}

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...He left the novitiate after remaining there only a fortnight.

What was the cause of his departure from the place which he had entered with such

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joy and zeal?...A letter of Father Lapierre...may throw some light upon the matter...

"Dear Sir and Friend:

"Your letter has caused me much sorrow. Still, as you are afraid of resisting the will of God by not entering the Society of Jesus, we, for the same reason, fear to take any steps to prevent you since receiving the letter in which you made know your determination.

"It seems that you are now encountering difficulties which you did not foresee. This may well cause you to doubt your vocation, since our Savior in calling us to a certain state, provides us with the means of entering it. It follows, therefore, that, if the difficulties which you encounter are insurmountable, it is a positive proof that God does not intend you to join the Jesuits. Such being the case, you belong to us, and we claim you. Return, therefore, and cast in your lot with those confreres who esteem and love you."

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He therefore returned to Annonay, to take his place among his confreres, as Father Lapierre had requested...

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When the college reopened in the November of...1824, he was appointed professor of rhetoric, a position which he occupied until 1837, that is, for thirteen years. The following year he gave up his work at the hospital, and was sent to say Mass for the little community at the Providence, thus commencing a ministry which he maintained for about forty years. About 1830, he also took charge of the Sunday services at the chapel of Gourdon, continuing this work until 1847.

Though still very young, Father Tracol had developed great facility as a speaker, the result of natural ability, constant labor, and frequent preaching... Since 1820, he had announced the word of God, at least once and often twice a week...When, in 1825, Father Tourvieille, parish priest at Vaux, asked that he might be sent to preach a retreat to the Sisters of St. Joseph, Father Lapierre did not think the work above his power...The next year, he performed the same office...at the request of Father Duret, for the sisters and children of the Providence...To judge from results, it seemed as if preaching retreats to nuns was one of the ministries to which Our Lord had called him...

...In November, 1827, he was attacked by a serious disorder which for many days put his life in danger. He was

at the time occupying temporary lodgings at the Providence, on account of the erection of new buildings at the College...

This sickness lasted for many months, and did considerable injury to the frail constitution of Father Tracol. It... obliged him to moderate his zeal and limit his efforts in class as well as in his chaplaincies...

About 1835, his health improved somewhat, and he recommenced his sermons to the religious houses of the town. In 1836 he accepted under obedience the work of preaching a retreat to his confreres. So great was his success that in September of 1837, Father Lapierre sent him to preach the retreat for the clergy of the diocese of Mende.

This same year, he was made director of studies, and in consequence had more time to devote to preaching the Gospel. He gave a number of retreats to the boys in our Colleges, to the confreres, and to several communities of nuns... He remained director only eight years, for, in 1842, Father Tourvieille, whose hand was no longer steady enough to write with ease, and whose sight had failed too much to permit of his keeping up with his voluminous correspondence, appointed him his secretary...

From this time, Father Tracol divided his life between work at his desk, the

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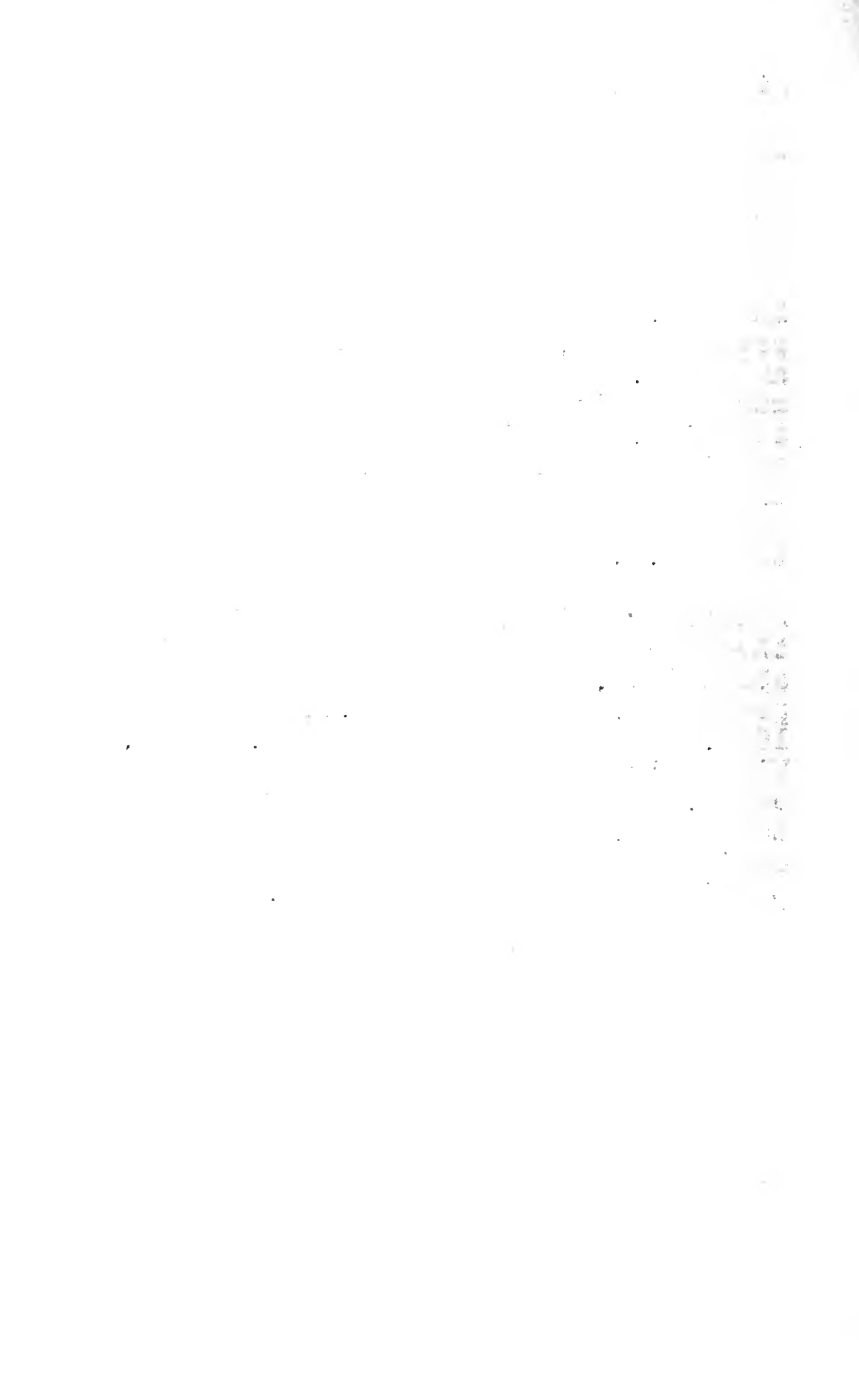
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care of the sacristy and the library, the chaplaincy of the Providence, and prayer and religious exercises which had for him a special attraction.

In 1852, when our Community took its present form, with the new constitution and vows, Father Tracol wished very much to join his confreres and his superior, but his director forbade him to bind himself by vows, on account of the cruples and spiritual struggles in which his conscience had become entangled...

Father Tracol was obliged to give up the regular attendance of the Providence about 1859, but whenever his strength permitted, he used to go...In 1866 or 1867, he went to reside at St. Barbe. His active life and his ministry were ended, and he devoted himself henceforth to prayer, meditation and suffering during the last years Our Lord was to permit him to spend on earth.

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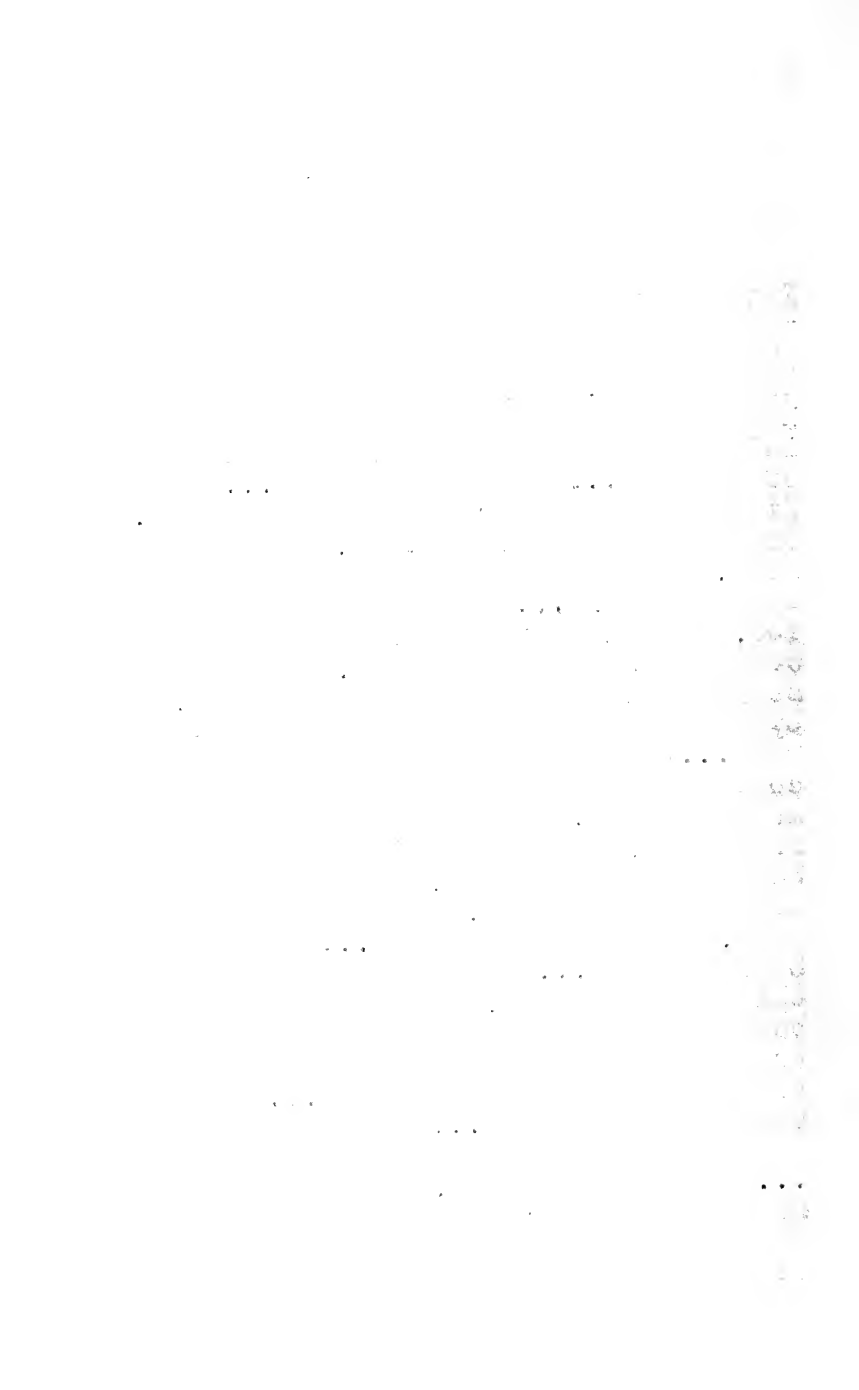


Chapter 2

EDUCATION OF YOUTH

Father Tracol devoted many years to the education of the young, and spent practically the whole of his life in their midst. For more than fifty years, he exercised a salutary and beneficent influence over the pupils of the College of Annonay...This long period...must be divided into two very distinct parts. During the first, that is, from 1814 to 1842, education was the constant object of his labors...During the second period, from 1842 to 1867, his influence over the boys was limited, both by his separation from the teaching staff, and by the diminution of his strength. His role...was restricted to rendering the college such little services as were asked of him. When confreres were sick or absent, he took their place in class; he held examinations, taught and directed the altar boys, preached in his turn, and above all gave...edification by his piety...We shall not dwell upon this later period, but shall confine ourselves to the study of his work as an educator during the twenty-seven years which he spent in the...task of teaching the young...

...From 1814 to 1819, he taught the grammar classes; from 1820 to 1824 he was professor of third year; from 1824 to 1837 he was professor of rhetoric



and during all these twenty-two years of teaching, he took his class regularly for four hours everyday. In 1837, he was made director of studies, and in 1843 he was called by obedience to other duties...

* * *

...In devoting himself to the education of youth, his ambition urged him to greater things than the mere teaching of human knowledge, for he wished not only to produce learned men, but especially christians. For him teaching was not an end, but simply the means of arriving at the end which he desired with all his heart, namely, a christian education and the sanctification of youth.

We shall find his innermost thoughts on the role of a teacher...in a religious conference which he gave the boys in August, 1815: "When your parents placed in our hands the work of your education, we contracted a scared debt. Society, in entrusting to us the precious deposit on which it builds its hopes, has thereby acquired an incontestable right to demand of us virtuous citizens. We have accepted this condition, and we are bound to procure your advancement in virtue and knowledge, but more than all this, we have made ourselves answerable before God for you, soul for soul...

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...In spite of his youth, for he was then only nineteen years of age, he understood well the vastness and grandeur of the mission he was called to fulfil...

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He was well aware that, with regard to the education of children, lessons produce very little fruit in the soul if they are not backed by the example of the master...

* * *

He was not content with instilling piety into the boys by his example and teaching; he offered up many prayers for them, and even got them to unite in them with him, as may be observed from a note written in 1834: "Today, the fourth of May, I have ended a novena for my pupils, in which I was joined by the more pious among them. I got this idea when reading a passage in the excellent work of Father Jouvency, De Ratione Discendi et Docendi. I will note down the practice, so that I may have recourse to it another year...

He completed his moral labors on behalf of the boys by the work of preaching. He always chose practical subjects for them...After his ordination he preached to the students at least once a month for many years.

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Father Tracol...wished to prepare educated men and virtuous christians for the world. He therefore conducted the training of his pupils with the same solicitude and zeal as he devoted to their moral education. When it was a question of preparing his class, nothing was allowed to interfere...

Although he found no difficulty in preparing his class, it was quite otherwise when it came to the class itself... This is proved from the following notes, written in 1840...when he was director of studies.

"May 31, 1840 — The boys' retreat... has done a wonderful amount of good, but it has not changed the giddiness of the younger boys, and I am ashamed to say that I have not the knack of keeping the attention of a class which I feel is absolutely necessary for progress... The young confreres whom I have taught in former days do what they like with their boys, while I am forced to recognize how little influence and skill I possess. I imagine I am doing the correct thing, and cannot understand why I do not succeed like the others. When I leave the classroom, I am overcome by the annoyance of not having done what I wished to do."

He was very exacting with the students, perhaps too much so, but he was still more exacting with himself. We must not, therefore, accept as literally

true what he says of his method of teaching...

* * *

Though some of his confreres found less trouble in teaching, and had more success, there were few, ..who took such pains over their pupils, and laboured more assiduously to succeed. We find the following in his book of rules for 1821: "Every year I read over Rollin's work on the duties of masters in his treatise on teaching...To enter more deeply into the spirit of the rule, I will read at least one volume of this excellent work every year, and I will select the beginning of the scholastic year as more suited for this, so that I may begin to apply it more accurately every year. I will speak little in class, and endeavor to preserve a reserved and modest demeanor, but not to the point of severity...I will be careful not to raise my voice, get excited ...and I will generally remain seated and not walk the floor, for this makes the boys inattentive. I will not allow them to disturb the silence or break any rule. Should they do so, I will punish them quietly after pointing out their fault, or will be satisfied with warning them, distinguishing carefully between faults which arise from levity and malice. For the rest of my conduct in the classroom, I will try to carry out what is prescribed by Rollin his treatise on studies which the rule obliges us to read every year."



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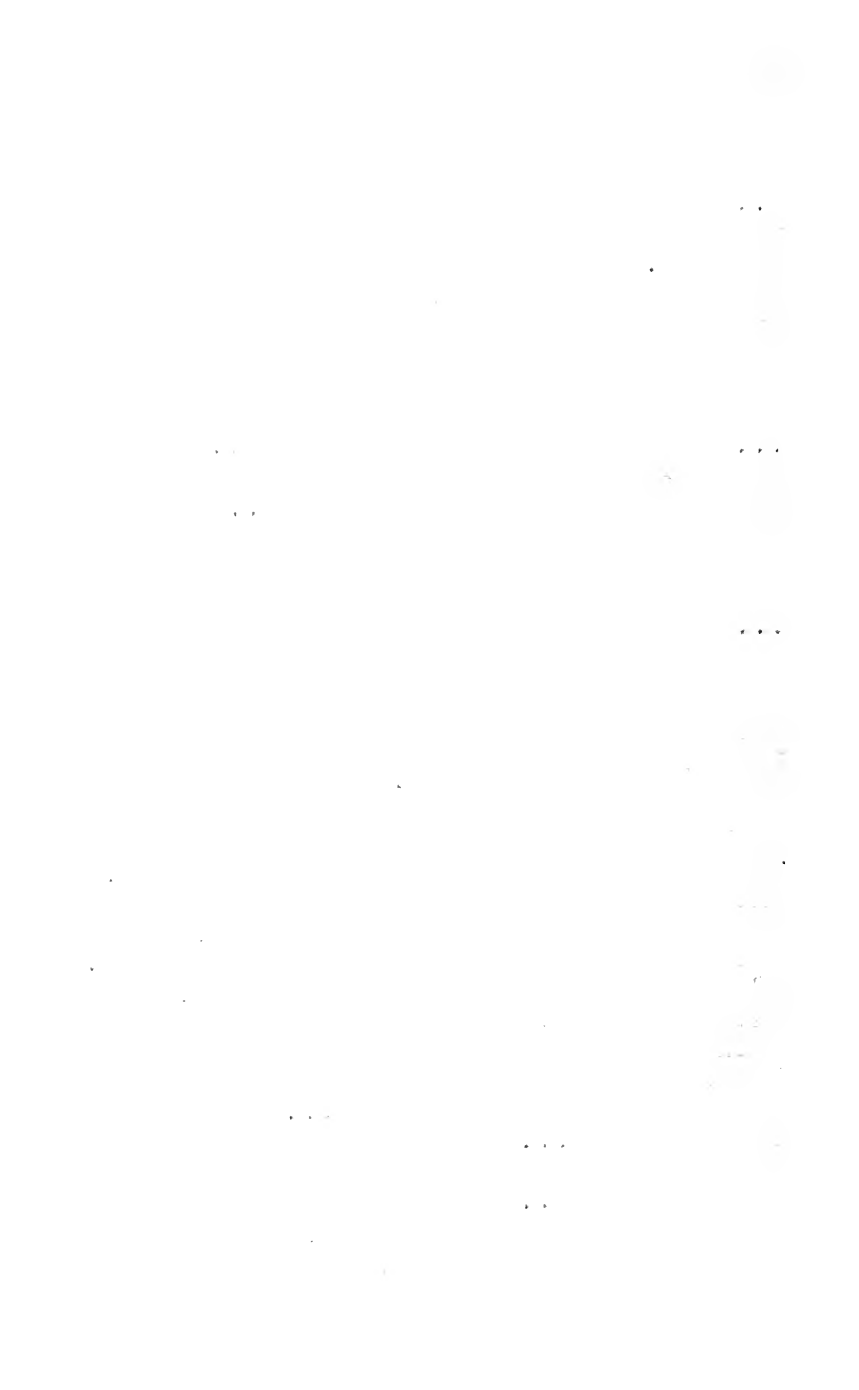
"...The preparation of my class ought to take precedence over all other studies. I will myself, in so far as I find it necessary, do the themes and other exercises which I give my pupils."

* * *

...His experience in teaching...brought home to him the fact that boys often do not know how to study or work...

...Father Tracol wished them to learn the text of the lesson perfectly. We will quote his ideas on the usefulness of following and learning an author which the professor supplements and explains if necessary.

"It seems to me that a professor should attach himself to a particular author, and deduce all his explanations in the form of a commentary on the text, dictating notes for the boys to copy down. If a man does not know one author, he knows nothing. A master will impose a useless fatigue on himself if he lectures in class, for at least three parts of what he says will be lost...Notes and commentaries...must not overburden the memory of his pupils or intimidate them by prolixity...It is a great fault for a professor to talk too much, or speak too learnedly in class, and unfortunately,



this fault is common even in the most accomplished teachers. Hence, it often happens that the progress of the pupil is not always in proportion to the learning of the professor. It is necessary to know how to communicate our knowledge, and this is much harder than we think.

* * *

"...When a person is teaching in a community in which a certain course has been adopted, it is not proper for an individual to substitute his own work. He should feel assured that Our Savior will bless his obedience..."

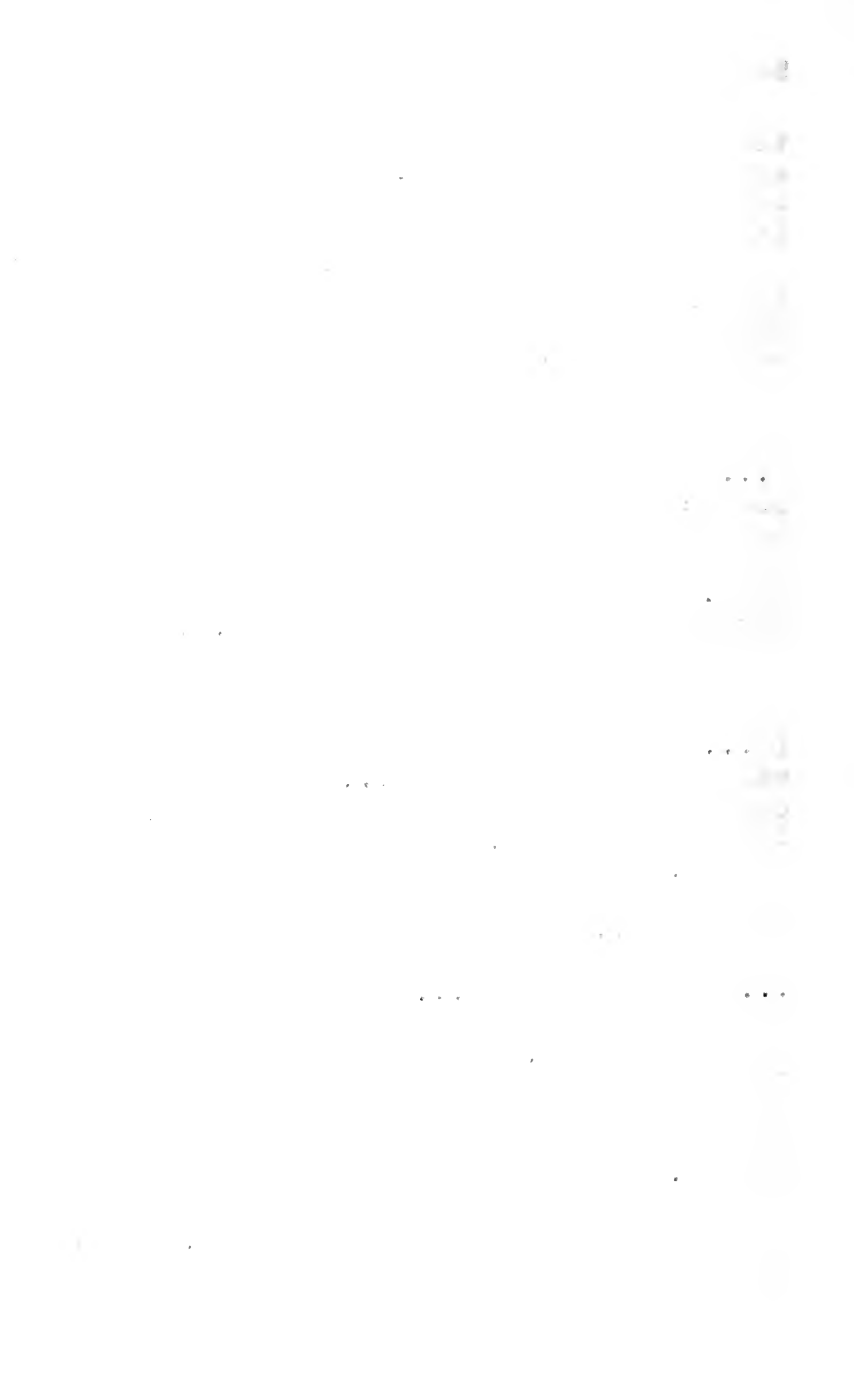
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To...remarkable intellectual gifts and eminent more qualities...which our dear confrere possessed in a high degree, let us add piety, charity towards his pupils, as well as devotion to their most cherished temporal and spiritual interests...

...From an old man...who deservedly occupies a distinguished position in the magistracy, we have chaosen <a letter in which< he shows us what impression many of the older confreres left on the minds and hearts of their pupils.

April 25, 1875.

My dear old Master,



It was a grateful duty and a debt of affection which I desired to pay by going to testify my respect and unalterable attachment for you...

I do not know how to describe my joy at seeing you again. In speaking to you, and hearing your kind words, I was carried back to the happy years of my childhood, spent at the College of Annonay; years so far away in point of time, but still fresh in my memory. I recalled the old professors, men so devoted, learned and perfect in all respects, to whom I owe the little I know and the little I am.

I once more beheld in you my professor of rhetoric and elocution, him who opened my lips to public speaking, who taught me to read, understand and admire the works of Homer and Virgil, Demosthenes and Cicero, Horace and Terence, Livy and Tacitus.

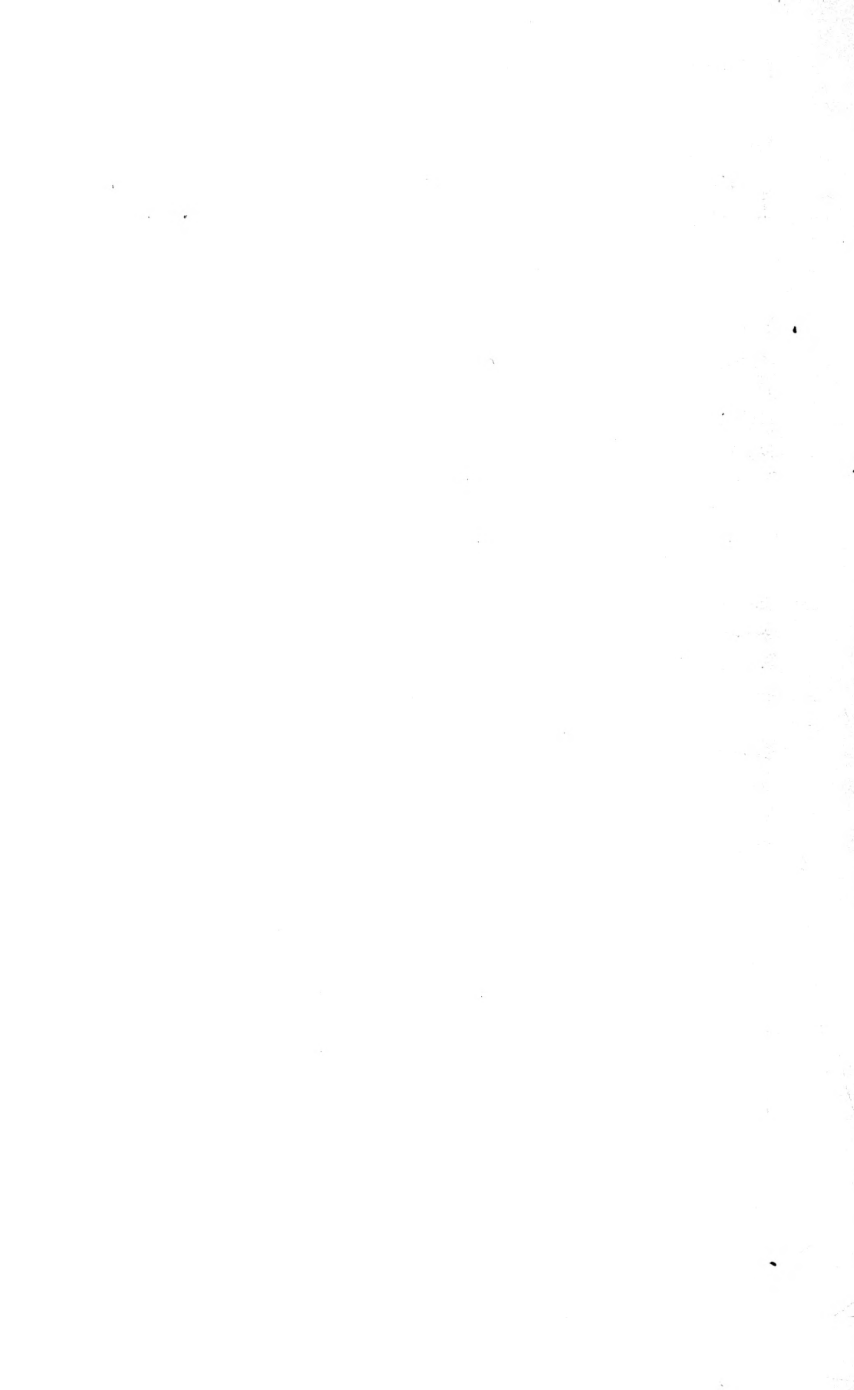
All of a sudden...I thought I saw those grand figures which I shall never see again, Fathers Lapierre, Tourvieille, Polly, Payan and Deglesne...whom death has snatched from us, but whom they can never make us forget...

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My only regret is to have missed the excellent Mr. Raynaud, who has so much right to my remembrance, and so large a share in my affection and not to have

had time to present my respectful regards to Fathers Soulerin and Clappe. I beg you to remember me to them...

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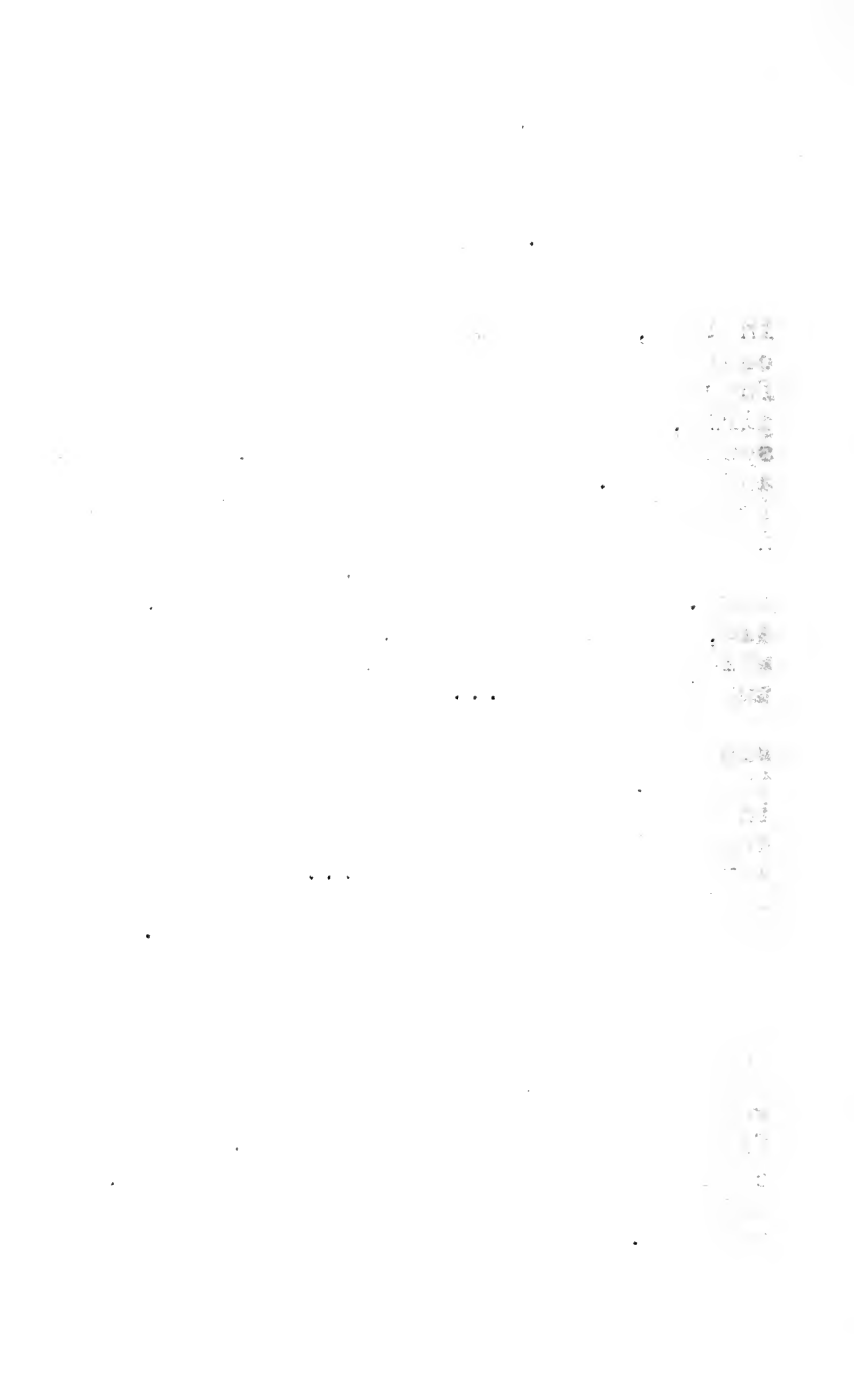
THE CONFRATERNITY OF
ST. ALOYSIUS GONZAGA

In 1822, there did not exist a single confraternity in the parish of Annonay founded expressly for young men and girls, with rules and instructions specially suited to their age, position, and needs. It was owing to Father Tracol's zeal that there came into existence a society for young women called the Confraternity of St. Aloysius Gonzaga. We shall explain its origin, its aim, its organization, the manner in which it was conducted, its development and its results...

Was he the first to think of this organization, or was he only an instrument in the hands of the parish priest of Annonay? We cannot pretend to throw any light on the matter...It is our business to set forth the humble and modest commencement of the society.

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The registration of members commenced on November 8, 1822, and some articles were written at the time to form the first statutes of the society. These contained only the most simple rules, quite within the capacity of all pious persons.



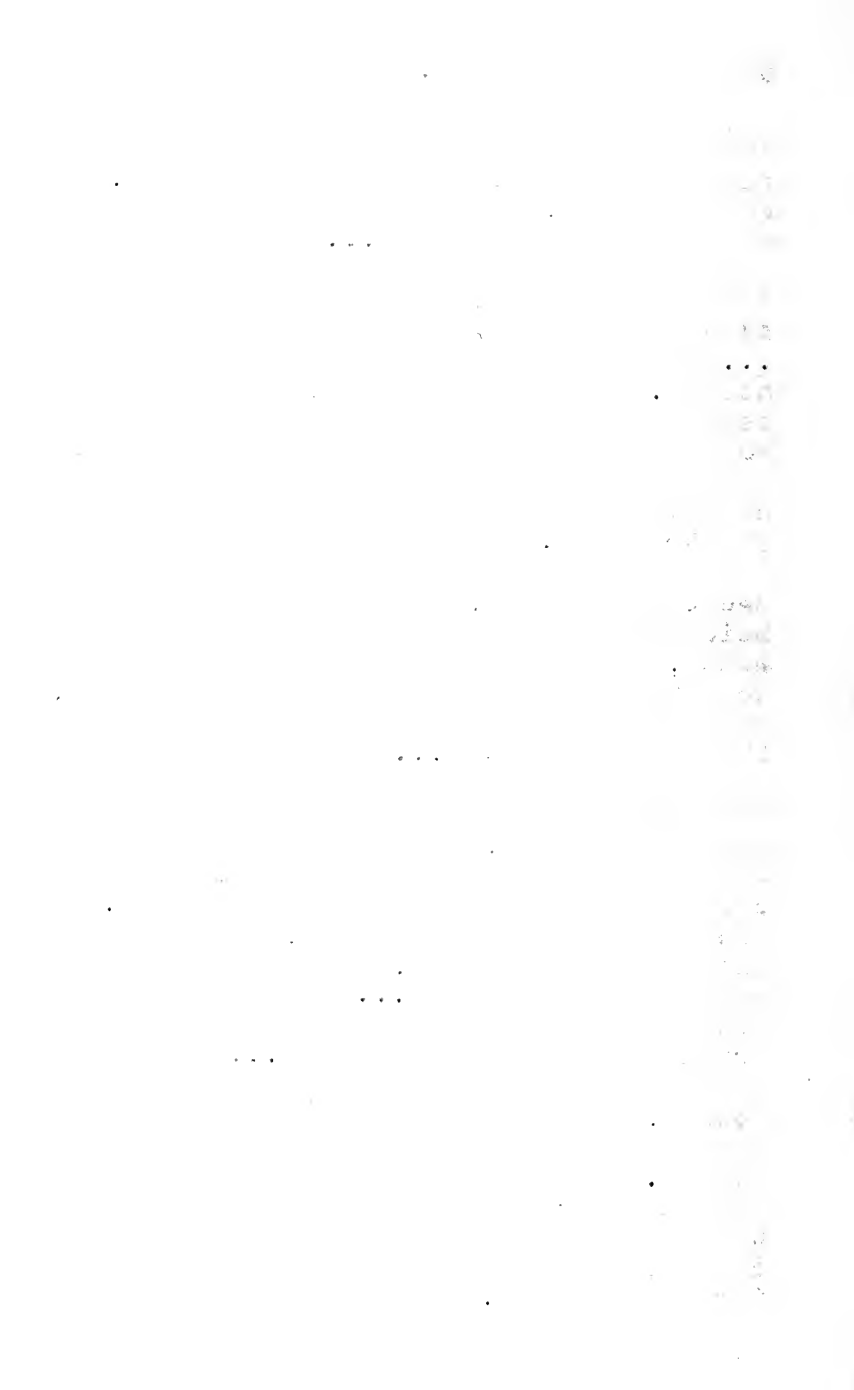
"Seeing that the work promised to be rich in results, one of my confreres, Father Pages, kindly offered to join me and share my labors...

"Father Picansel, parish priests of Annonay and vicar general of the diocese ...gave in writing all the authorization needed. At the same time, he gave us permission to have Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament at each meeting, and to hold a retreat every year in our chapel with a procession out of doors at the close.

"We thought that, as the meetings were held only on the first Sunday of the month, we could extend this pious work to some of the young people of the town, who met on the third Sunday and performed the same devotions...

"We succeeded in gathering a certain number together, but it was necessary to receive them into the house, and procure them a few games and amusements. The order of the community, the short time at our disposal, want of space and other inconveniences...obliged us to abandon an undertaking which did not promise the desired results...

"Still, good will and enthusiasm continued in this association of young people. They were faithful in attending the meeting; they made offerings towards the decoration and adornment of the chapel, and the number of members increased daily.



After a year of experiment...the pious director wrote out the constitutions... He first of all explained the aim of the association and the conditions required for admission.

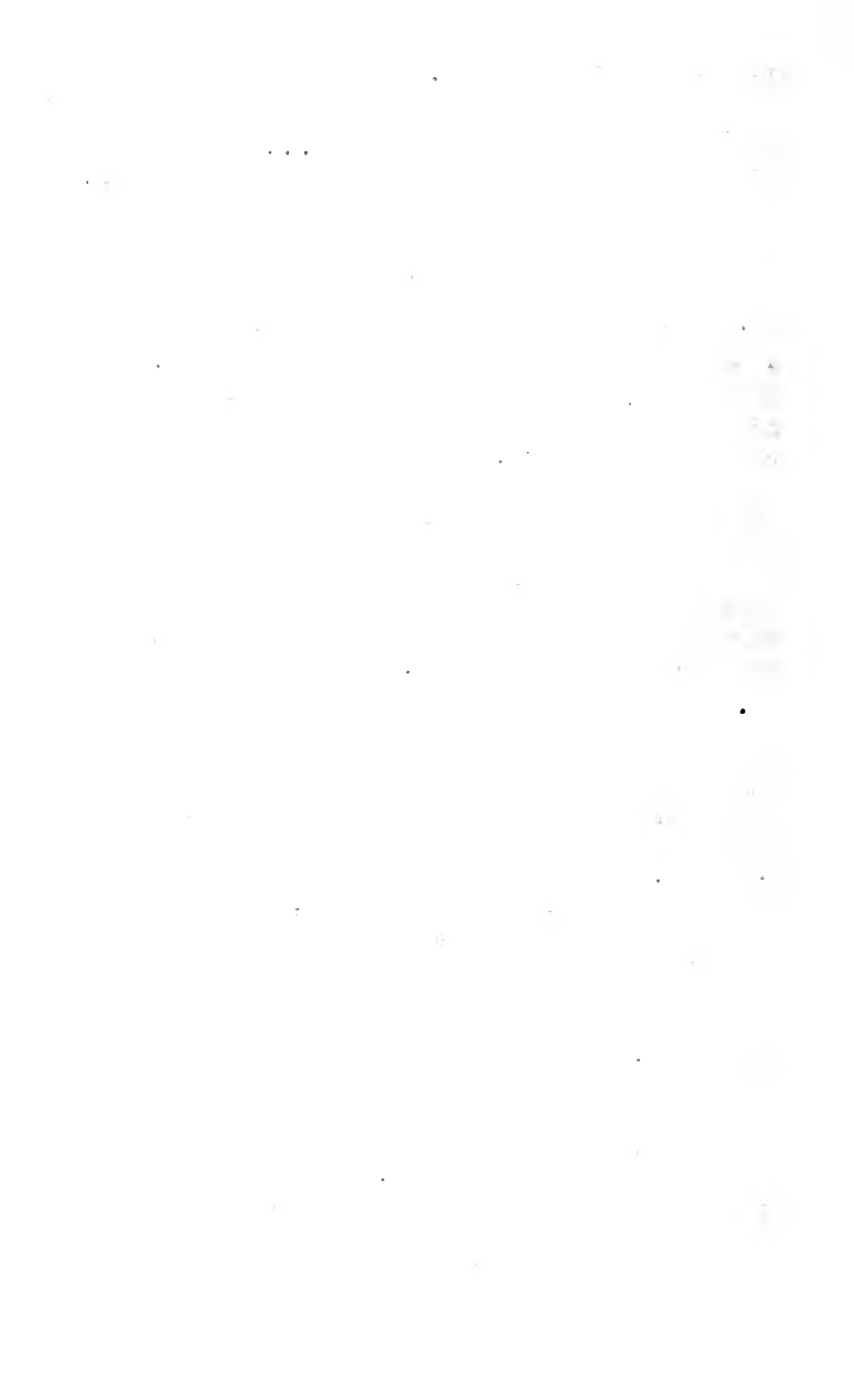
"The aim of the society is to honor in a special manner and to imitate St. Aloysius, whom our Holy Father, Benedict XIII has made the patron of christian youth.

"To attain this end, the members should not limit themselves to their personal sanctification, but must endeavor with prudence and zeal to procure the salvation of all persons of their sex, especially the young.

* * *

"Those who enter the association make no vow, wear no particular habit, and have no rule obliging them under pain of sin. Their only monasteries are their houses; their chapel, the parish church; their vows, those made at baptism; their cloister but obedience and the spirit of retirement; their grille the fear of God and their veil holy modesty.

"The association admits only unmarried persons, and such as are not members of religious communities. The age limit is from seventeen to thirty. This reule will be broken only when the director thinks it necessary or tending to the good of the association.

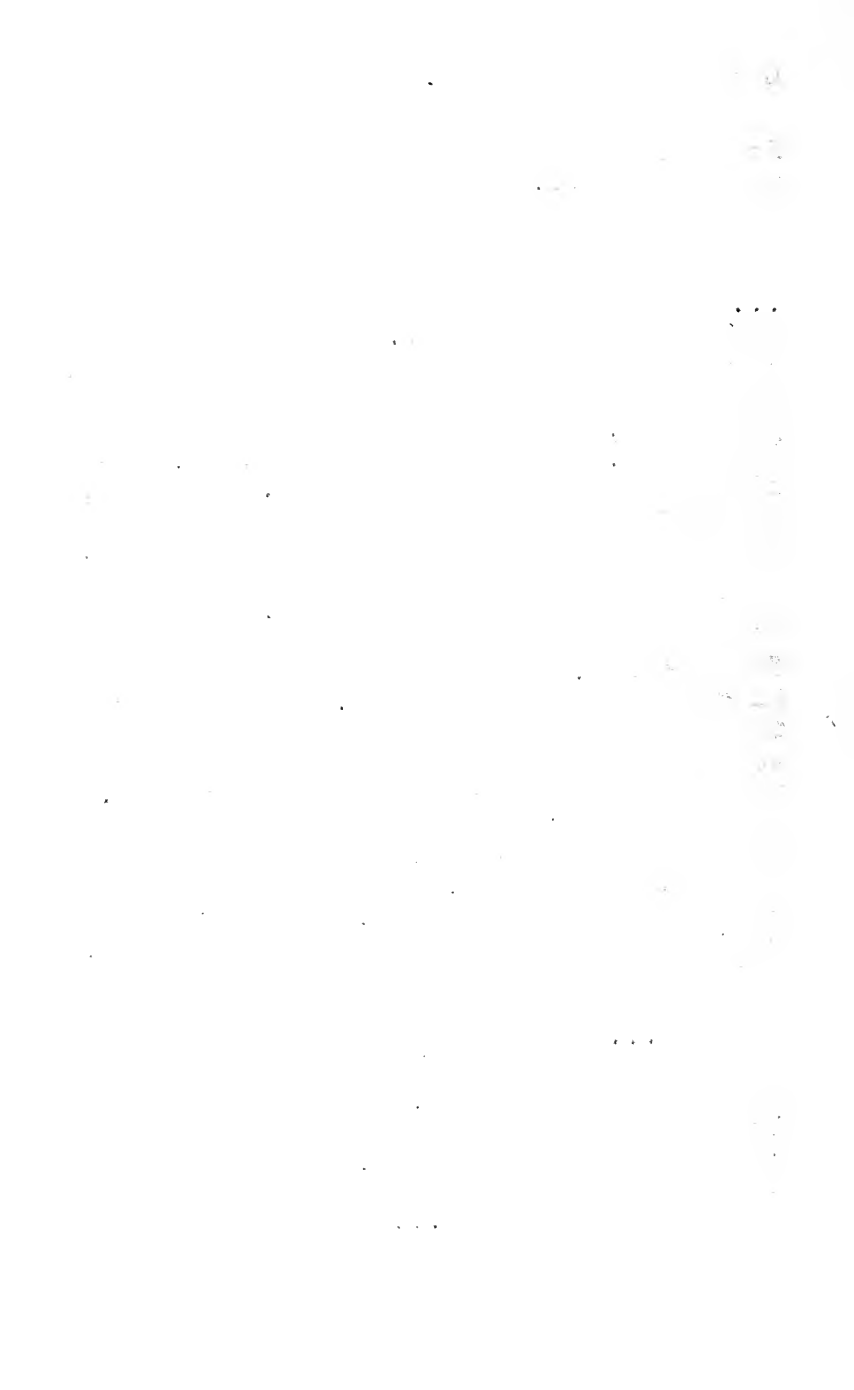


He next explains the organization of the society...

* * *

...What were the obligations of those who became members?...They had to make a quarter of an hour's meditation daily, attend Holy Mass when their occupations permitted, make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, have spiritual reading, recite a prayer in honor of St. Aloysius, and carefully examine their conscience on the faults committed during the day. They were to go to confession and Communion at least once a month. The first Sunday of each month was the day for meeting, and on the last Sunday was kept the monthly retreat. Every year they were supposed to do their utmost to attend the common retreat or to make one in private for three or four days.

The monthly meetings, held at first in the college chapel, and from 1824 in the chapel of the Ursulines, began by the recitation of the Veni Sancte Spiritus, followed by a hymn and the announcement of the names of postulants who had applied...The director then gave some advice on the sanctification of the month then beginning, followed by an instruction or conference suited to the capacity of the members, and terminated the service with Benediction of the Most Holy Sacrament...



Father Tracol was not satisfied with asking from the members of the society mere ordinary and common virtue; he wished to see a true and solid piety in them. For this, he entered some spiritual thoughts in the book of rules ...among them:

* * *

"That is not always true piety which is surrounded by many exercises and devotions, but that which is fed by solid virtue.

* * *

The most ordinary and serious defect in piety is to associate a thousand faults with it, a thousand imperfections ...Piety must not be short tempered, impatient, proud, self-sufficient, singular, fond of back-biting, full of levity, capricious or inconstant.

"People are willing enough to practice virtues which suit their dispositions, but neglect such as are contrary to them.

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"To be agreeable in the sight of God, it is not sufficient to do good; we must do it well.

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"The love of God must be the mainspring of our actions. The christian soul does not love holiness for the pleasures it provides, but because it pleases God.

* * *

"In piety, we must always place duty before devotions, and the duties of our state before works of supererogation.

"We do not like the duties of our state, because they are tiresome; we prefer something novel, because we are thus enabled to satisfy our self love and have a desire for liberty.

"True virtue is perfect in all things. Sincere humility is its foundation, charity is its soul, mortification nourishes it, kindness makes it always liked, modesty regulates its exterior without affectation."

Such short...reflections...often served him as subjects for his sermons. He dilated on them with great power, enriching them with details, and deducing extraordinary applications...

* * *

The ladies of St. Aloysius had to seek not only their own sanctification, but also the salvation of their neighbors... Father Tracol wished them to preach by example...

* * *

...The work provided the director with numerous consolations...He had the happiness of obtaining the approbation of the diocesan authorities for it, and of seeing it canonically erected and enriched with indulgences by His Holiness, Leo XII. To his joy, it prospered...Under the direction of Father Tracol, there were always two hundred members...The society was at first purely local, but within a year of its birth it spread beyond Annonay, and... was taken up at Lyons...

About this time, the convents of Vaux, Issingaux, St. Julie-Molin-Molette, Maclar, Chainas, and St. Valliers set about founding branches of the confraternity on the model and under the auspices of that at Annonay...

Of all the confraternities of St. Aloysius created at this time, the one most cherished by Father Tracol was that of the seminary at Avignon. He himself tells of its origin. "When on a visit to Our Lady of Aiguebelle during the holidays of 1823, God permitted me to make the acquaintance of two young ecclesiastics of the diocese of Avignon. As a result of some conversation on the matter, one of them, Mr. Petre, secured the permission of his superiors to establish a Society of St. Aloysius in St. Charles Grand Seminary, to consist of

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some of the more fervent seminarists. We kept up a correspondence on this pious work until he was ordained...

This society flourished well and a high degree of fervor was maintained, thanks to the advice of Father Tracol who recommended that only a few of the seminarists be admitted, and of these, only such as were of uncommon virtue.

* * *

...Criticism, more or less serious... may be seen from certain passages entered in his diary in 1826. "What ought to fill us with high hopes for the Confraternity of St. Aloysius, is the fact that it was founded on contradictions, and bears the seal of the cross. I should never have believed that it was so difficult and wearisome to do a little bit of good. I have sometimes felt astonished at...what certain persons who are in other respects pious, have thought of me and said of the society...They have even gone so far as to say that devotion to St. Aloysius might injure that which we should have for the Blessed Virgin; as though Our Lady were not the mother and protectress of the society as well as our holy Patron!"

* * *

...The society cost Father Tracol a considerable amount of labor. Besides giving advice, holding meetings...

He did most the work of preparing a prayerbook for the members of the confraternity, and having it printed... Besides all this, the work of establishing the confraternity in several parishes...obliged him to keep up a heavy correspondence, either with the directors in those parishes, or with the diocesan authorities.

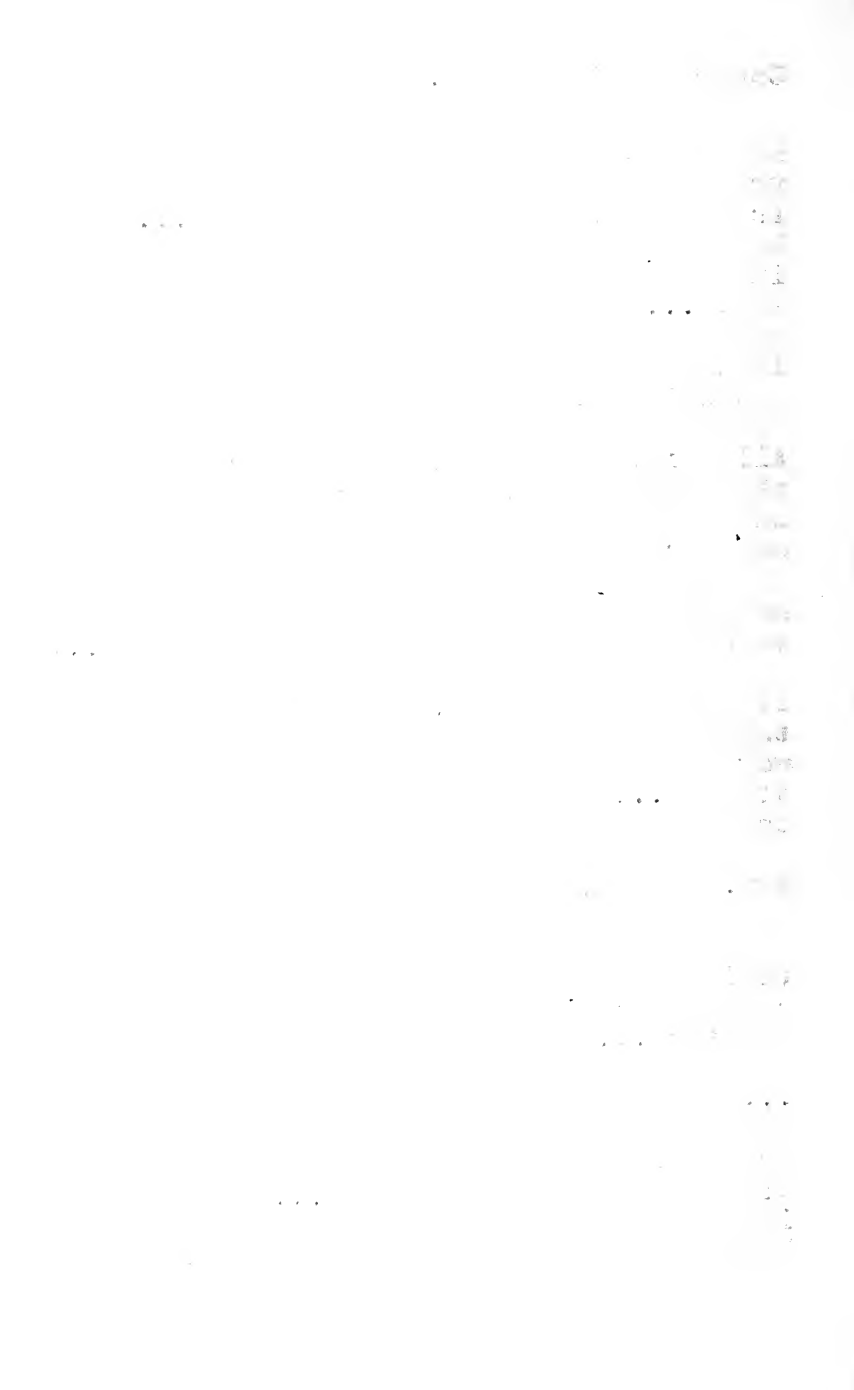
All this, as we see, demanded considerable extra work, and we can easily understand why he wrote in 1828: "I have occasionally to fight against a kind of discouragement and sloth which tempts me to imagine that I should do better to hand over this work to someone else...

It was only in 1832, four years later, that he gave up the direction of this work for reasons which we find in his journal...Letter to the parish priest on February 21st:-

Rev. Father,

A month has passed since Father Tourvieille informed you of my intention concerning the Confraternity of St. Aloysius...

...You have the full number of curates, and you have even two supernumerary priests, so that there should be no difficulty in replacing me...Now that it has become so easy to replace me, I hope you will permit me to retire...



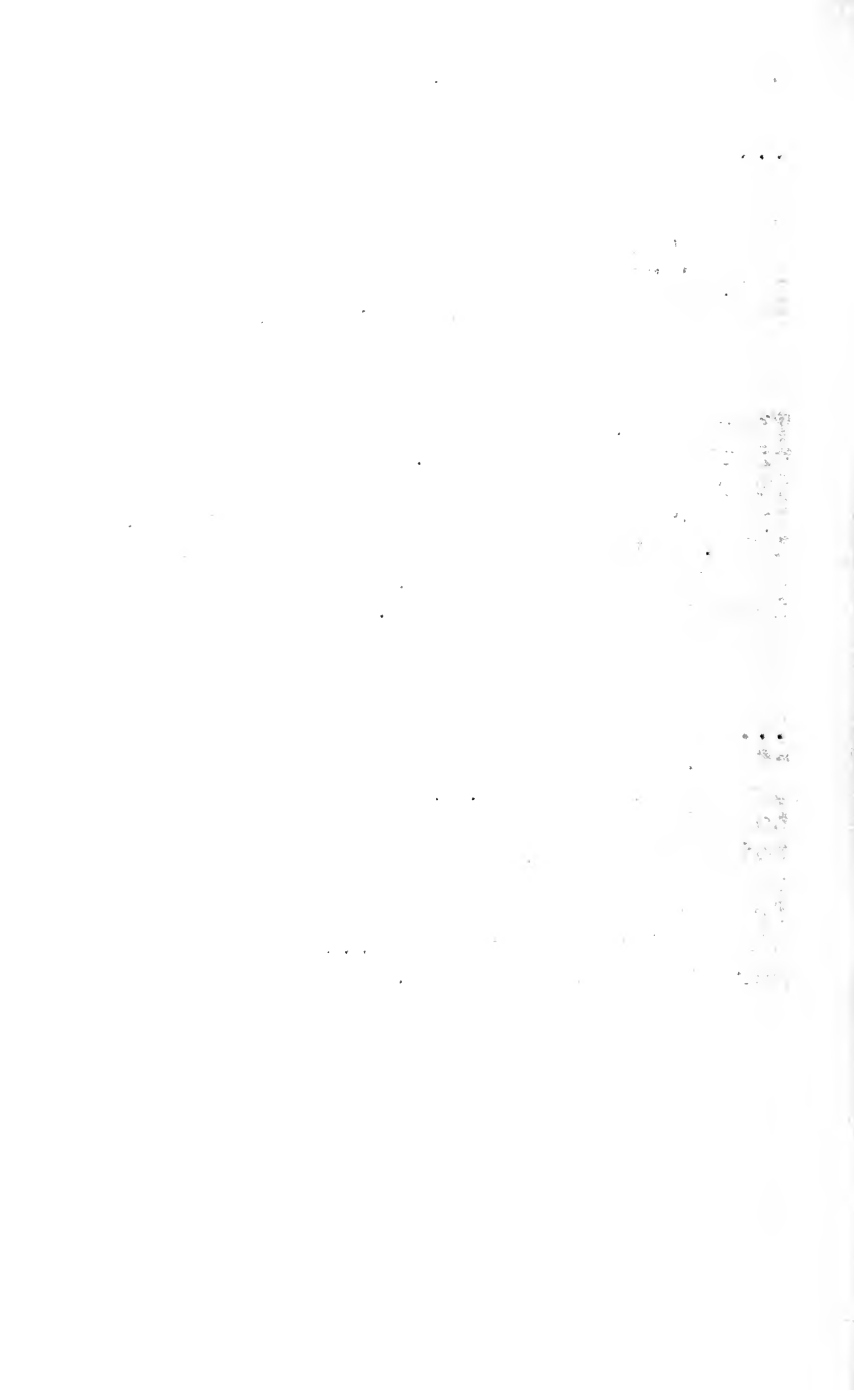
...I will supply my successor with all the necessary information, and I will continue to take a lively interest in the success of a work for which our Savior has deigned to employ so vile an instrument as myself.

* * *

Therefore, after remaining at the head of the Society of St. Aloysius for nine years and four months, I was replaced by Father Bechetoille on February 28, 1832. At the meeting of that day, which was Sexagesima Sunday, the parish priest installed my successor."

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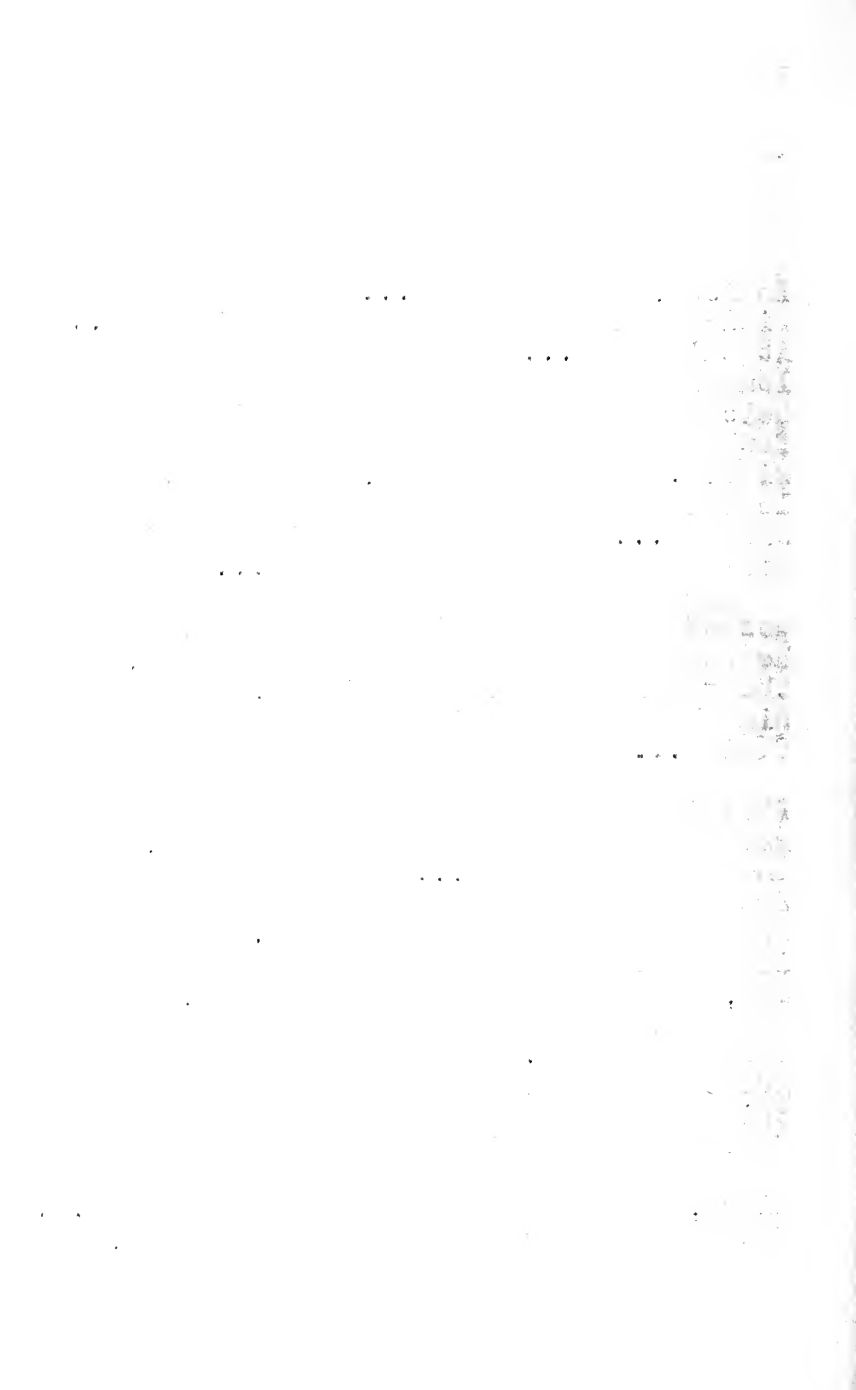
...Under the new director the ladies of St. Aloysius continued to show a truly solid piety...The society ceased to exist on the death of Father Bechetoille in 1864, and the greater number of the members entered the parish confraternities of the Immaculate Conception which were founded...for the same purpose as that of St. Aloysius Gonzaga.



THE HOUSE OF PROVIDENCE

In 1825, an obedience...opened a new field of labor to Father Tracol's zeal... At this time...Father Duret was no longer able to lavish that care on his beloved House of Providence which his fatherly and apostolic heart would have wished. He was obliged, therefore, to look among his confreres for a priest who was...capable of following up his work and understood his ideas... Father Tracol seemed in his opinion to possess all the desired qualities, so he begged our first superior general, the venerable Father Lapierre, to make him chaplain of this little religious family...

Thus it came about that Father Tracol gave up the service of the hospital, and commenced that...with the House of Providence which he was destined to keep up for about forty years. The institution was then scarcely ten years old, and small in the eyes of men, for there were only ten nuns and about thirty orphans. But it was already great in the sight of God; for everything in it breathed the piety and fervor of which its two founders, Father Duret and Mother Antoinnette Liou, had set such a beautiful example... Father Duret possessed a lively faith,



an ardent zeal, a great spirit of poverty and humility, as well as an unbounded goodness and charity. He shunned no sacrifice to come to the aid of...the two establishments which he had founded, namely the College of St. Barbe, and the House of Providence. He did not even hesitate to go begging for these Houses when their resources were exhausted. An unalterable sweetness shone on his countenance, and he always wore a gentle smile...He was grave and serious by nature, nor did he ever make up his mind on any important matter until he had given it serious consideration. Moreover, his advice was noted for its profound wisdom and rare prudence, and was much sought after by ecclesiastics, religious communities and even by the civil authorities.

The character of Mother Mary Antoinette Lioux resembled that of her spiritual father in more than one respect. Though she was not brilliant or cultivated, she had at least the faculty of seeing into things, a solid judgment, as well as the qualities necessary for giving good advice, and the power of making that fact appreciated...Supported, therefore, by the prudent counsels of Father Duret... Father Tracol set to work with courage if not with joy...

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...He never neglected anything which

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could help the development of the work either in its spiritual or temporal affairs. He shared the troubles...of the superiors of the House,...He begged for them, and had the happiness of obtaining many offerings for them which enabled them to admit a greater number of orphans. Finally, he even gave up a portion of his private property to this work...

In 1827, he helped the mother foundress to draw up a directory and book of rules for the community. In 1840 he saw to the first printing of the rules which the diocesan authorities had given the sisters...This was done a second time in 1862. It was through his good offices that the House of Providence received several excellent sisters, women full of intelligence, piety and charity whom he had known and directed in the Confraternity of St. Aloysius...

Later on, he wrote the history of the community. He composed some sketches on the origin and progress of the undertaking, and preserved the memory of some of the first sisters of the House in a few fairly long biographies. Father Filhol made a copious use of them when he wrote the history of the House of Providence and the lives of the foundresses, which he published in 1881. In fact, they are only an abridgment of Father Tracol's work.

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Although he helped the convent in its temporal affairs, it was chiefly to the spiritual needs of the orphans and sisters that he devoted his efforts...

* * *

...He did not...limit himself to giving advice; he united preaching with example...In order that the children might receive a good religious instruction...he wrote a course of christian doctrine which was clear, precise...and perfectly suited to the understanding of his hearers. He wished them to be well trained in the science of religion, but desired still more to educate them in the practice of virtue...He founded the Confraternity of the Infant Jesus, for the younger, and that of St. Aloysius for the older. He took a particular delight in presiding over their meetings and their little feasts...He preached their retreat on several occasions...and in the sacred tribunal was the director of their consciences for a number of years...

...Father Tracol has the happiness of seeing many of them take the religious habit either at the House of Providence or in other communities...

As he had to labor at the formation of a religious community, he did not forget to show the sisters the happiness and advantages of their vocation...

* * *

...He addressed them as follows in 1827: "What an honor it is for you, my dear Sisters, to be chosen by a special providence for a work which this town needed so much! It is you who have begun the new undertaking, and it will be what you make it...Found it on humility and simplicity if you wish it to prosper...and to do all the good that God has the right to expect of it."

In 1860, he gave them another conference on humility:"...Your life should be essentially humble and hidden in all respects, for you are the servants of the poor. The christian education of a few children, the care of sick persons... some humble work in colleges; such is your lot and your heritage. There is nothing extraordinary, brilliant, or capable of attracting the eyes of men to your holy vocation. Your true perfection and holiness will therefore consist in doing the commonest things in a way which has nothing common about it; in changing the vilest metals into gold by purity of intention...You should endeavor to be forgotten so absolutely, that men may see only Providence in the work you perform as His instruments..."

"Happy are those members of a religious community who endeavor to live without noise or publicity; who shut themselves up in the routine of their employment without interference with that of others..."

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Father Tracol often preached to them on charity, a virtue without which it is impossible to have a true community spirit; and he showed them how it springs from true humility and perfect obedience...

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Father Tracol was not fond of speaking generalities, and he liked to enter into details, especially when he spoke of rules of conduct...

"Do not distinguish yourself from them in your occupations by acting in such a manner as to be singular or to differ from them.

"If it be necessary, or if it pleases them, omit some exercises which are only a matter of devotion or attraction... In a word, put up with others and try not to make them suffer on your account.

* * *

...When you are refused a permission, or receive a penance, instead of pouring your grievances into the ear of one of the sisters in a torrent of complaints ...console and strengthen yourself by a visit to the Blessed Sacrament."

* * *

The virtue which Father Tracol loved to dwell on most was obedience... for he knew its importance in religious life, and appreciated its advantages...

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"Happy is the soul which sees the mark of God's authority on the brow of the superior, and hears God Himself speaking through her, whether she commands, forbids or corrects...Unhappy are the superiors who have to deal with persons who are rude and hard to manage...who are quick to judge, and repay the trouble taken for their sakes with discontent. But let them not be deceived, for the groans of an afflicted superior mount to the throne of God and call for vengeance..."

* * *

...Father Tracol, who ardently desired to lead the Sisters of the House of Providence to perfection, often charged them to esteem and love the rules, and consequently to obey them with greater exactness and fervor...

* * *

"It is not sufficient to observe the rule on certain points; it must be followed in its entirety. Every step taken outside of it is a step out of the road, a step which leads us astray into dark paths and which will end by bringing us where we do not wish to go.

"Generally speaking, the rule is never sufficiently respected or considered, and is therefore never properly obeyed ...A good religious always finds a fresh

subject for meditation in the rule, and discovers there some secret of perfection that was not apparent before...

* * *

His influence over the formation of this community was remarkable, but it would have been greater and have left a more lasting impression, if scruples and a restless conscience had permitted him to unite actions with words...We find the following entered in his journal on December 20, 1830..."I have written today to the Sisters of the House of Providence in obedience to the advice of my superiors, to tell them that increasing infirmity and other reasons oblige me to stop hearing the confessions of the children under their care."

"It is a species of ministry to which, for several reasons, I do not think I am called. If anyone should be surprised at this, I would answer that one can be a priest without performing all the functions of the priesthood, and therefore without hearing confessions when one has not the charge of souls...I think at present that it is my duty to stay away from the holy tribunal almost entirely..."

* * *

It was only with the greatest difficulty and after continued insistence, that he consented to accept the direction of a few persons...

Unhappily, the number of souls which he desired...to direct in the paths of perfection was very restricted, and, without daring to blame his conduct in this connection, we may at least be permitted to regret it...We may judge of the extreme timidity which he felt in performing this duty from some passages in <a>...letter to a sister...

"Remember, I beseech you, remember that a director has to render an account..."

* * *

His ministry in this house was thus limited for the next thirty years to the celebration of Holy Mass and preaching once or twice a week until 1859-1860. He continued to preach to them on the religious, until September, 1863. This year, he again preached their annual retreat; and it was his good-bye to a community which called him its second spiritual father...

This separation was made necessary by age, feebleness and infirmity, though ...even to the end of his life, he did not cease to show the most touching marks of the great interest which he took in it.

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VARIOUS MINISTRIES AND CORRESPONDENCE

The education of youth, the Confraternity of St. Aloysius and the chaplaincy of the House of Providence, were the labors to which Father Tracol devoted a large portion of his zeal and his life; but at the same time he acquitted himself of these important and difficult undertakings, he had other work on his hands. Although they were humble and modest, they deserve to find a place in the history of his life...

Father Tracol was librarian for about thirty-five years, and his work in this connection was performed with that rare and wonderful love of order which always distinguished him. But though the library was well arranged and carefully kept, truth obliges us to confess that it was not always easy for the confreres to obtain access to it, for Father Tracol, moved, no doubt, by the fear of seeing the works confided to his care misused or lost, was somewhat too strict and careful in his guardianship.

In 1825, he was placed in charge of the sacristy, and he retained this office, together with that of master of ceremonies, until 1866. We need not speak of the scrupulous care with which he looked after the vestments, the sacred vessels and the decoration of the chapel,

or his strictness in seeing that the ceremonies were carried out with all the precision called for by the rubrics... From an entry which he made in his journal on Maunday Thursday, 1832, we learn the reason for his love of this work, and for the perfection with which he carried it out.

"I often have the happiness of decorating the altars, especially during this wonderful week. It is a favor, a privilege, which I cannot sufficiently appreciate. If a king were to permit me to arrange the furniture of his chamber, to put his papers in order, to prepare his throne and assist him...I should feel highly honored. But when the King of Heaven deigns to make me the caretaker of His house, and to permit me to watch over the maintenance and majesty of his worship, what joy should fill my heart! I find an example of the assiduous attention which our Savior expects of me, in the holy woman who anointed his feet with precious perfume; in the concourse of people who strewed His path with palms, and placed their cloaks in the way over which He was to pass and in the fervent disciples who prepared the banquet hall in which their Divine Master was to eat the Pasch.

"I have not rich vestments, or rare or precious ornaments at my disposal, but I should at least see that everything is clean, decent and orderly..."

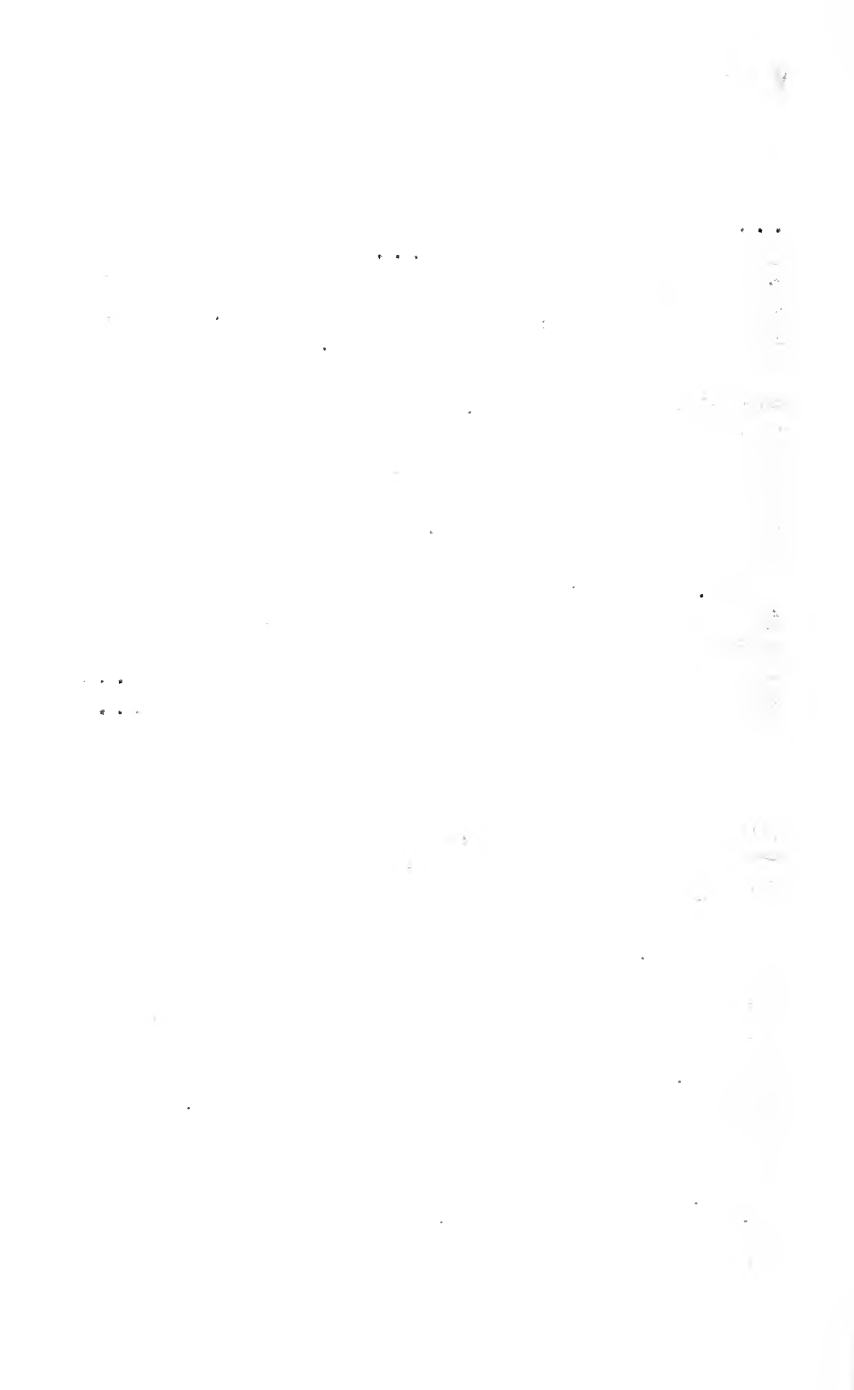
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...His words were not the effect of a temporary enthusiasm...We find them repeated several times in his journal; the following, written in March, 1845, is a good example of this.

"During Holy Week, I shall have the happiness of spending a part of my time working in the chapel, looking after the holy altar and the ceremonies I am supposed to oversee. I am most fortunate to be able to devote myself to this work. Though I am not able to do what is done by so many preachers, confessors and zealous priests, I should at least devote myself with great earnestness... to what our dear Lord expects of me..."

* * *

From 1820 to 1825, he said the daily Mass at the hospital, and from 1830 to 1847, it was his duty to look after the services every Sunday at the chapel of Gourdon. During this long period, he did not permit a single Sunday to pass without announcing the word of God, either to the poor patients at the hospital, or to the inhabitants of the castle and the farmers at Gourdon. His duties in these two Chaplaincies brought him into contact with persons who, as a rule, were not well instructed in the truths of religion; consequently, he preferred to teach them the doctrine of

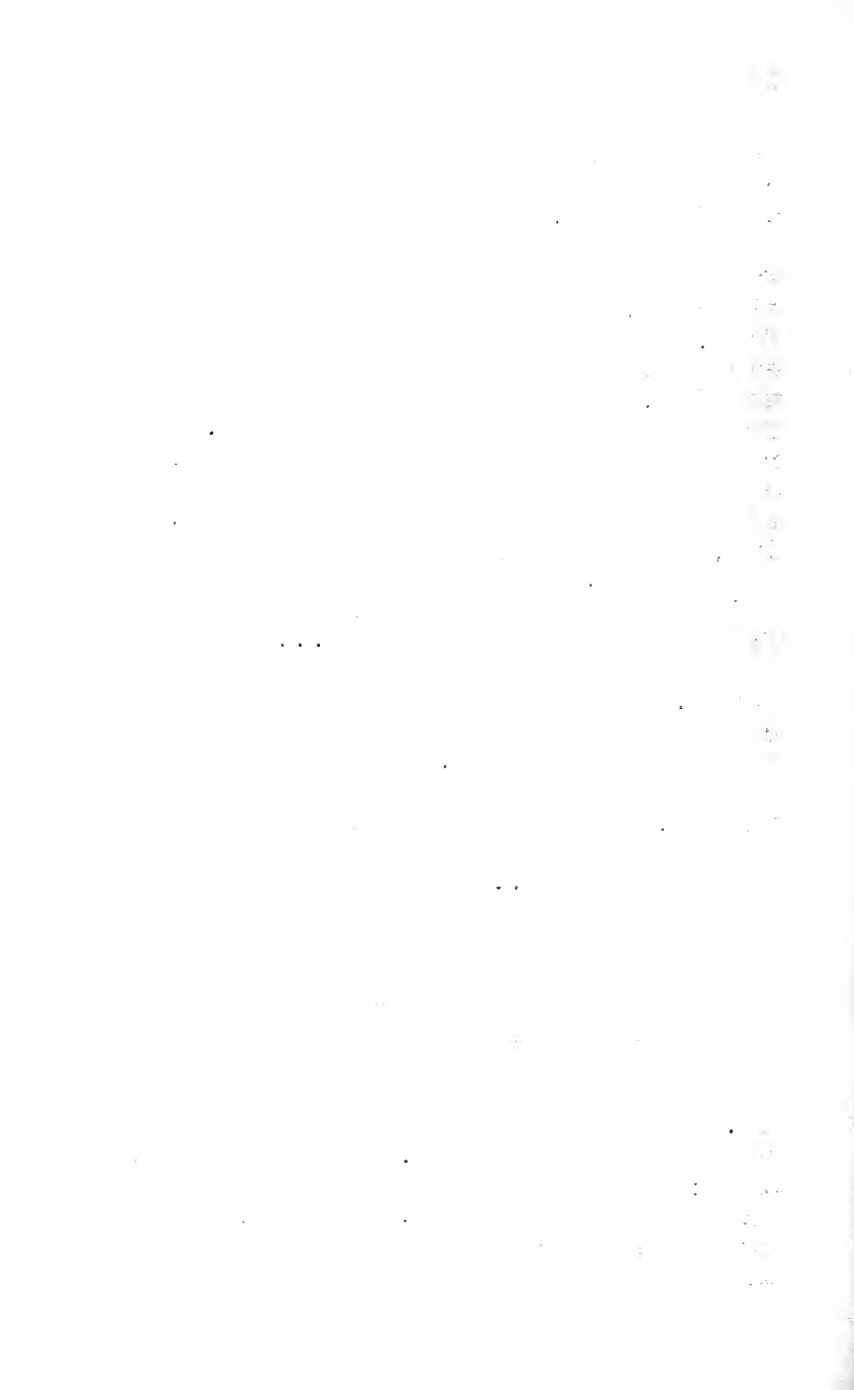


the Church, and his instructions were rather an explanation of the catechism than sermons.

This chaplaincy at Gourdon was not a sinecure, for he nearly always went on foot, generally setting out on Saturday evening, but sometimes even on Sunday morning, if his duties prevented him from leaving the evening before. He returned before mid-day on Sunday, in order to attend at Vespers and preach either to his Confraternity of St. Aloysius, or to the inmates of the House of Providence. Although this work was a trial to him physically, our dear confrere felt compensated by...the many opportunities he had of doing good to souls. He also enjoyed a real spiritual consolation in his conversation with the Count de Vogue. This nobleman was a man of profound piety and distinguished virtue, and he liked nothing better than to converse on pious subjects with Father Tracol...

* * *

Father Tracol kept up this good work for many years, but there came a day when his health was no longer equal to the strain, and he had to discontinue it. We may learn from his own words how much it cost him. "December 31, 1846:— When I was taking leave of the bishop (this was Mgr. Guibert, of holy memory), he informed me that I was relieved of the duty of attending the

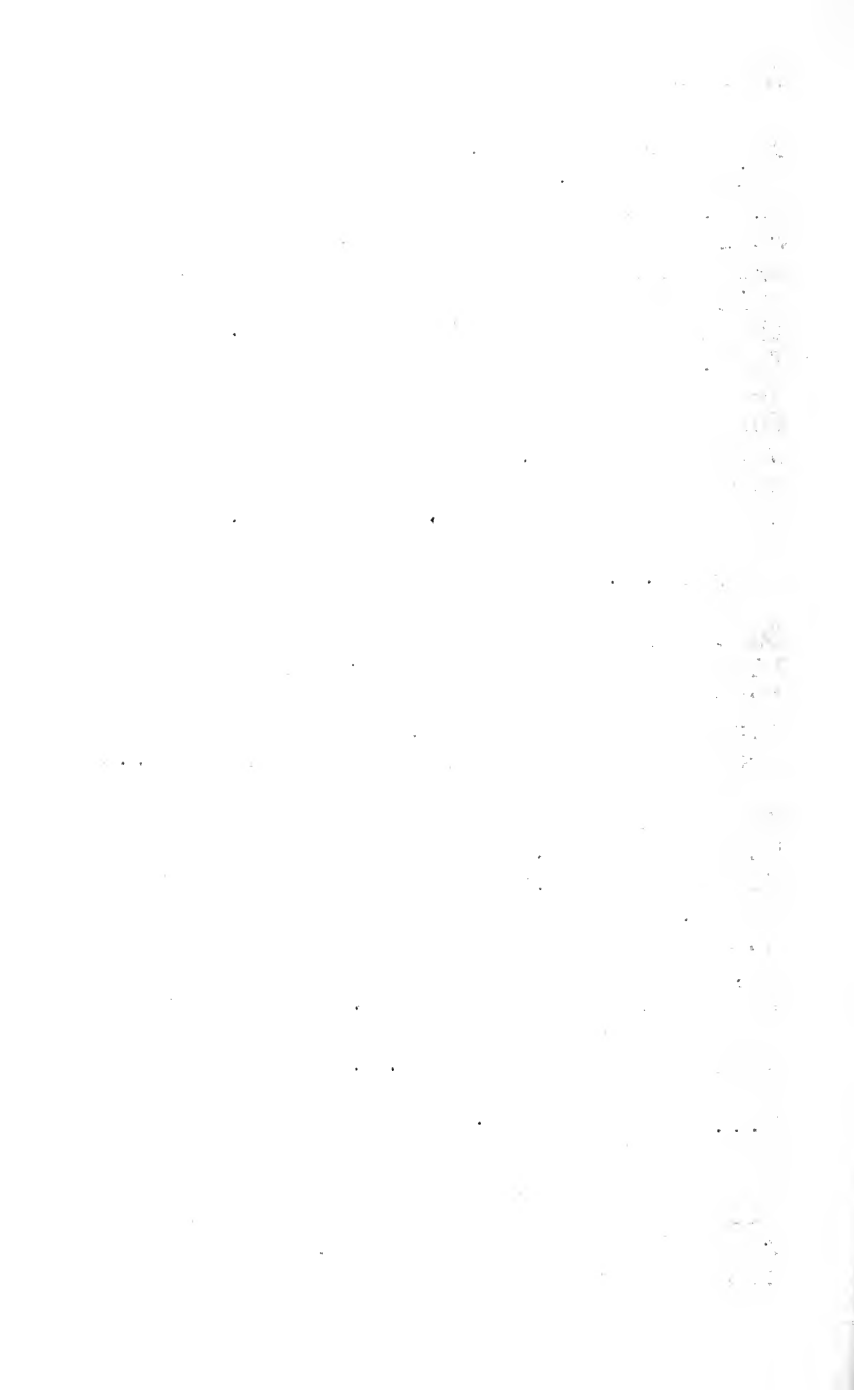


chapel of Gourdon, and that the parish priest of St. Calir had been given permission to say two Masses in order to replace me at the castle. This step was taken on account of my health, which no longer permitted me to walk there when the weather was bad. In fact, I had written to inform the Count de Vogue that it would be impossible for me to be at my post when the cold was too severe, and that he must not expect me on the morrow when I did not come in the evening. Moreover, the superior had no one else to send to Gourdon..."

On the day on which he thus expressed his thoughts in his journal, Father Tracol had spoken to the Count de Vogue about being replaced, and the latter wrote him next day, January 1, 1847...

"You told me yesterday that you had been replaced. The news was very painful to my ear, but still more to my heart, for no one can ever replace the attention, the care, and if I may say so, the attachment which you have shown for us these many years. No one can ever efface the feelings of affection which we have for you..."

"...I ardently hope that when the weather is propitious and the finer season sets in, you will grant us the pleasure of seeing you once more. Your room will always be ready, and we shall esteem ourselves very happy whenever



you...occupy it...

"I beg you to convey our thanks to Father Tourvieille for his kindness in sending you to us for so many years, and to express to him my sincere desire for its continuation at a future period."

* * *

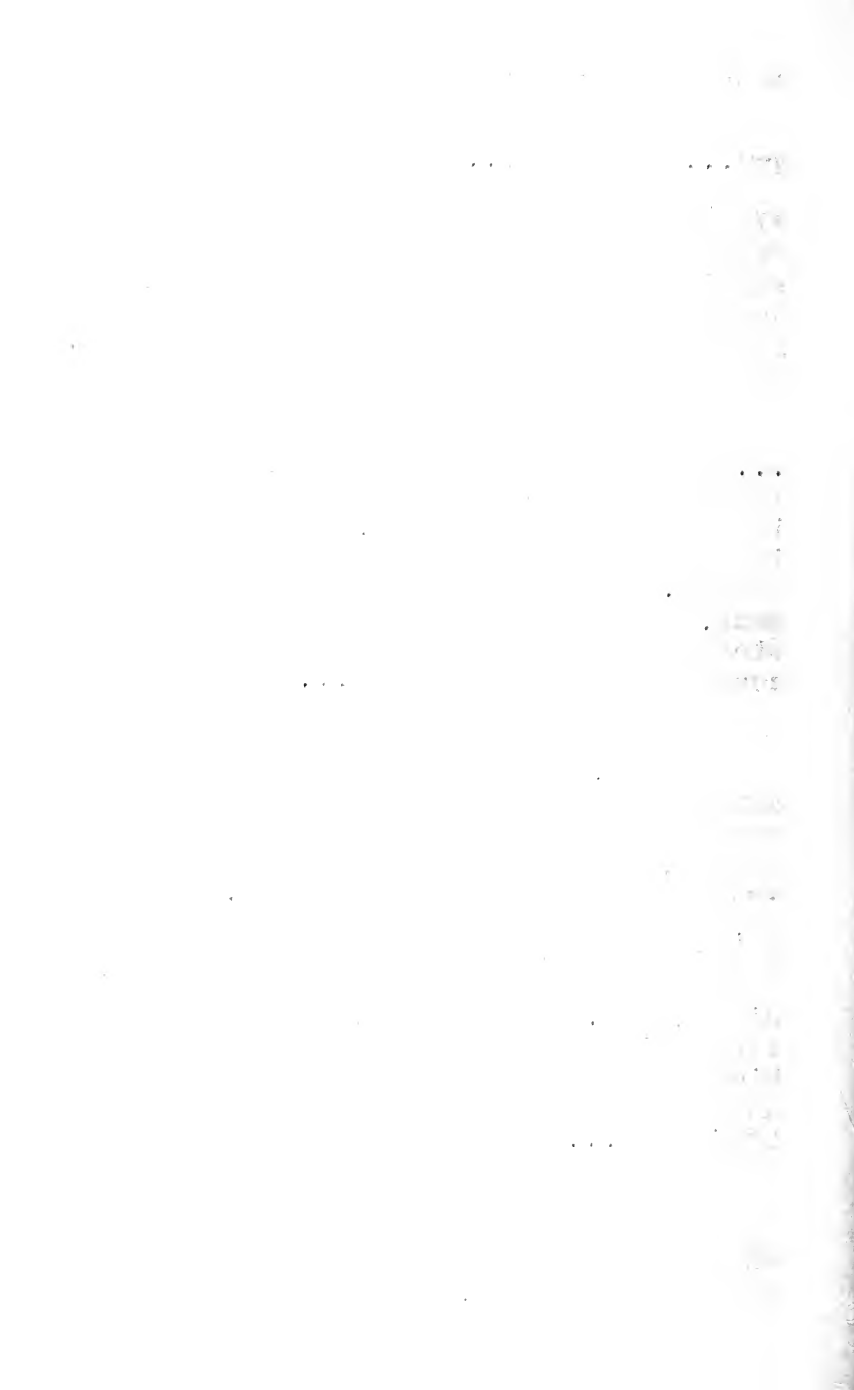
...For more than forty years, Father Tracol performed the duties of chaplain in one place or another, and that this included preaching the word of God every Sunday. But besides these regular sermons, he gave a great number of instructions at the request and even at the command of his superiors...

* * *

Although he disliked preaching grand sermons and spoke in a very simple manner, for more than ten years he wrote out all his instructions. Later on, he contented himself with writing a short skeleton or plan containing the principal divisions and thoughts of his discourses. After this, being well versed in his subject, he abandoned himself to the inspiration of the moment and spoke truly from the abundance of the heart...

* * *

When he had to prepare a retreat of eight or ten days, he wrote the general



plan of the retreat, and also not only the skeleton of each instruction, but often the whole of many of them; or else he took som sermons he had already written which were suited to the matter in hand.

He preached altogether nineteen retreats; one to the Confraternity of St. Aloysius in 1826, one at the College of Annonay in 1837, one at the College of Privas in the same year, one in 1839 to the Sisters of Notre Dame at Tournon, two to the Sisters of St. Joseph at Les Vans in 1825 and 1827, six to the Sisters of the House of Providence in 1826, 1829, 1840, 1847, 1848, and 1863; one to the priests of the Diocese of Mende in company with Father Tourvieille in 137, and six to our own Community in 1836, 1842, 1848, 1850, 1853 and 1854.

* * *

...We cannot devote much space to these retreats, but we may speak of his sentiments, conduct and methods of procedure in giving these pious exercises. In his journal, we find a fairly complete account of his second retreat to the Sisters of St. Joseph at Les Vans.

"February, 1827:— Out of obedience to my superiors, and in response to the pressing invitation of Father Tourvieille ...I wnet this year to give a retreat to the sisters under his care. It was

held at their mother house, and, as usual, there was a large number gathered together, composed of nuns who are called rural sisters, whose duty it is to teach the children in small parishes. I felt a strong presentiment that the retreat would be a success, for I had undertaken it without any particular wish of my own, and had even tried to decline it. Then, again, the journey upset all the plans which I had prepared several months before the end of the term...

* * *

After indicating the plan he intended to follow in giving the retreat, and describing the subjects of the instructions and conferences, he continues: "The following is the order for the exercises to be observed by myself:—

"Rising, 5:00; meditation until 6:15, Community Mass after meditation; breakfast at 7:15, followed by preparation of the instruction; instruction at 8:00; 9:30, reception in the parlor of such persons as wish to consult me, then Little Hours of the holy office and those of St. Aloysius; 11:30 reading of Holy Scripture and examen; 12:00, dinner and recreation; 1:45, visit to the Blessed Sacrament; 2:00, conference, reception in the parlor, Vespers and Compline, preparation of the instruction; 3:00, instruction; 6:30, Benediction, Matins

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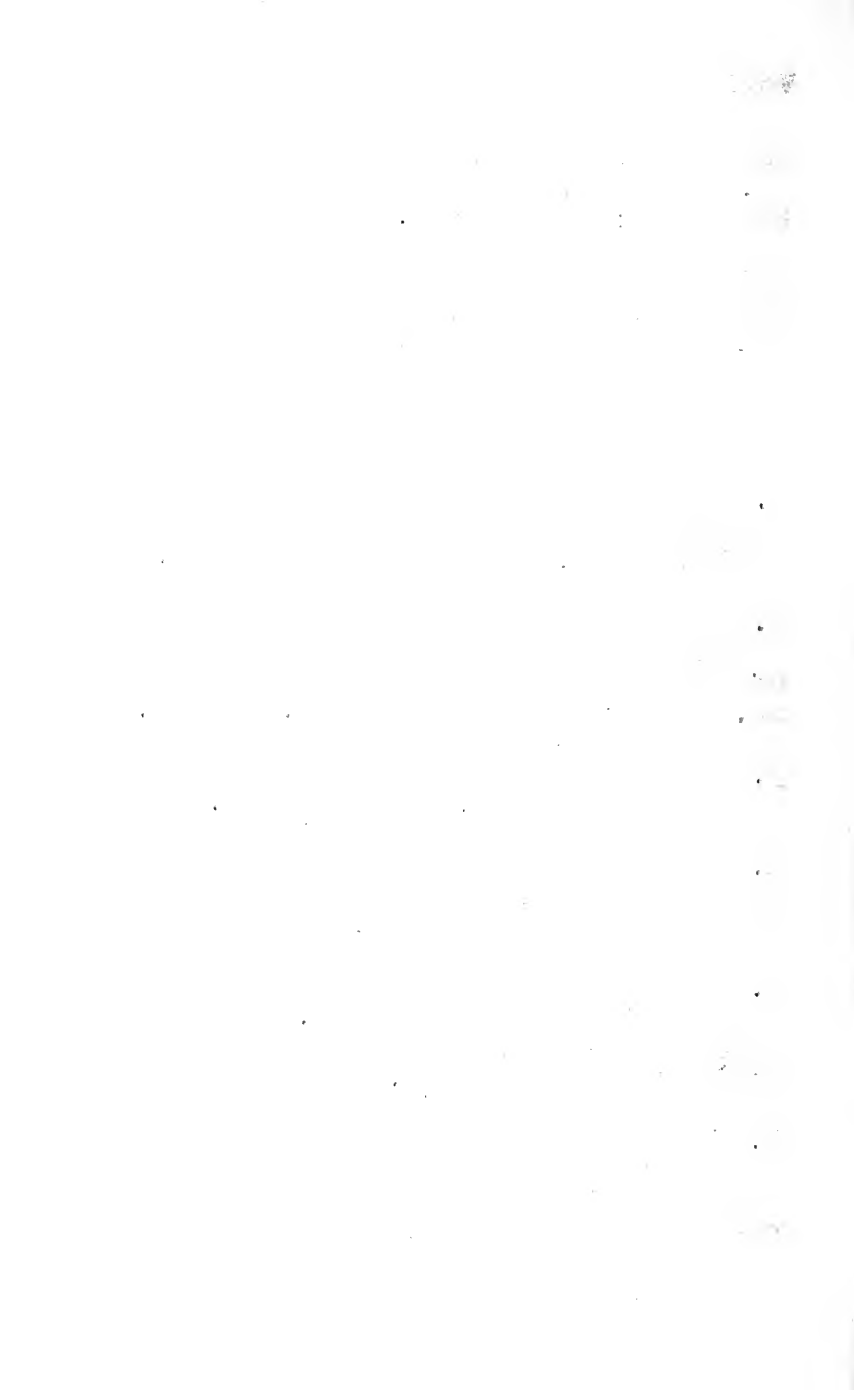
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and Lauds, supper, rosary, office of St. Aloysius, night prayers and bed between 9:00 and 9:30."

While he made the above regulations for his time, he also made the following rules for his conduct:

RULE OF CONDUCT FOR MYSELF
DURING THIS RETREAT

1. I shall request the parish priest to open the retreat himself with the Veni Creator, and ask his blessing.
2. I shall commence the exercises by placing them under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, the Holy Angels, St. Aloysius Gonzaga and St. Joseph.
3. I shall spend three quarters of an hour every day in meditation.
4. I shall remain in private as much as possible, and make only such visits as are necessary.
5. I shall never receive anyone of the opposite sex in my room. If any need consult me, it must be in the parlor at the convent.
6. I shall hear no confessions, so as to lose no time necessary for preparing my instructions, and to avoid other inconveniences.



7. I shall not remain too long at table, at least no longer than etiquette strictly requires of me. However, this rule depends much on circumstances.
8. I shall be very reserved in conversation with regard to pleasantries.
9. I shall be exceedingly prudent in giving advice on certain questions and in destroying certain abuses.
10. I shall do my utmost to encourage recollection and silence in this large assembly of persons making the retreat.
11. I shall not take any of my meals with anyone except the parish priest, at least during the retreat.
12. I shall recite the little office of St. Aloysius every day even were it necessary to take time from my hours of sleep.
13. On all days when it is permitted, I shall insert the prayers to the Holy Ghost and the Holy Angels at Mass.
14. Before going into the pulpit, I shall always say the Memorare, the Angeli Dei, and an invocation from the litany of St. Aloysius.
15. I shall be moderate and gentle in my sermons, and be religiously

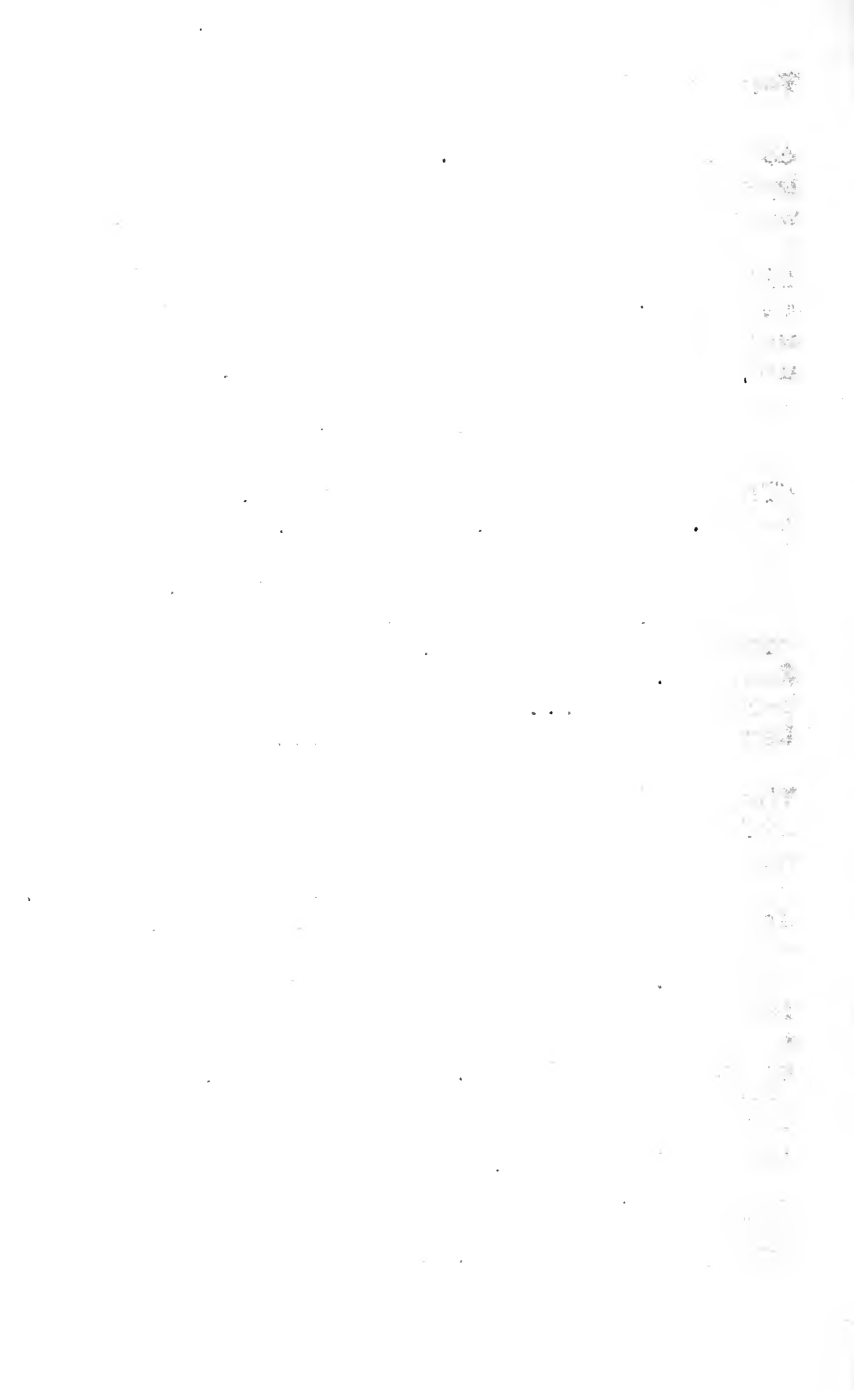
composed exteriorly. I shall not permit myself to be disturbed if I am not always as successful as I should desire. I shall not speak of my instructions either concerning their worth or their poorness; I will pray fervently for all who are making this retreat and offer up some mortifications for them.

* * *

"The retreat began on Thursday, September 6. On Sunday, the ninth, I spoke in the parish church on the necessity of serving God from childhood; and, on Thursday, the last day, I distributed some leaflets headed, Souvenir of the Retreat. I then added a few words on perseverance...I spent three days at Les Vans after the retreat..."

The outline of Father Tracol's interior life would not be complete if we did not add here some extracts from his correspondence with others. There is scarcely one of his letters, if any, which has not piety or charity for its subject. As a professor, he wrote to former students to bring them back from the path of sin to that of virtue and to keep them in it. As a priest, he gave advice to layment and nuns who consulted him on the manner of fulfilling their duties. As a member of a community, he kept up an intimate correspondence with some his confreres who were at a distance...

* * *



<Letter from a former pupil with whom he kept up a correspondence for more than fifty years>

"April 24, 1847:— Your last letter brought me very sad news. There is great joy in heaven, for it has gained another inhabitant, but there is great affliction on earth, for it has been deprived of one of those men <Father Payan> who are good par excellence, and of one of those angelic natures, the like of which is seldom encountered...

* * *

"You must remember, my venerated friends, the particular right that Father Payan had to my gratitude and lively affection. You are right. I have never lost sight of him and I shall never forget him as long as I live..."

* * *

In order that we may learn how he wrote to pious persons who were in communication with him, we shall select some passages from letters which he wrote to a very virtuous persons on different occasions. The first relates to a family misfortune and is dated February, 1837.

"Madame,

I cannot rest satisfied with having asked Father Pages yesterday to communicate my

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sincere sympathy to you in your misfortune, nor could I resist the desire of sending you a few lines of condolence and consolation.

* * *

"Those who have not been tried know nothing, those who have been put to great tests make progress in the science of the saints, in the pre-eminent knowledge of Jesus Crucified.

"I know, Madam, that you appreciate and understand these words and my priestly heart could not speak otherwise in such circumstances. Our good God wishes you to feel the cross a little more, and not only you, but the pious family which surrounds you. Adore His designs, and continue as you have done to submit yourself lovingly to these painful but beneficent operations of grace. Ask for courage and strength, and you will see by a happy experience that God keeps His word, and far from permitting you to be tempted beyond your strength, He will enable you to come forth triumphantly with most sensible spiritual advancement.

* * *

"I hope you will offer a little portion of your troubles up to God for the conversion of sinners, as well as for my poor soul..."

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The person to whom Father Tracol addressed these christian and priestly sentiments...had guided herself by the advice of our dear confrere for some years...

<In> one of her letters...she begs her adviser to help her perceive the motions of grace...

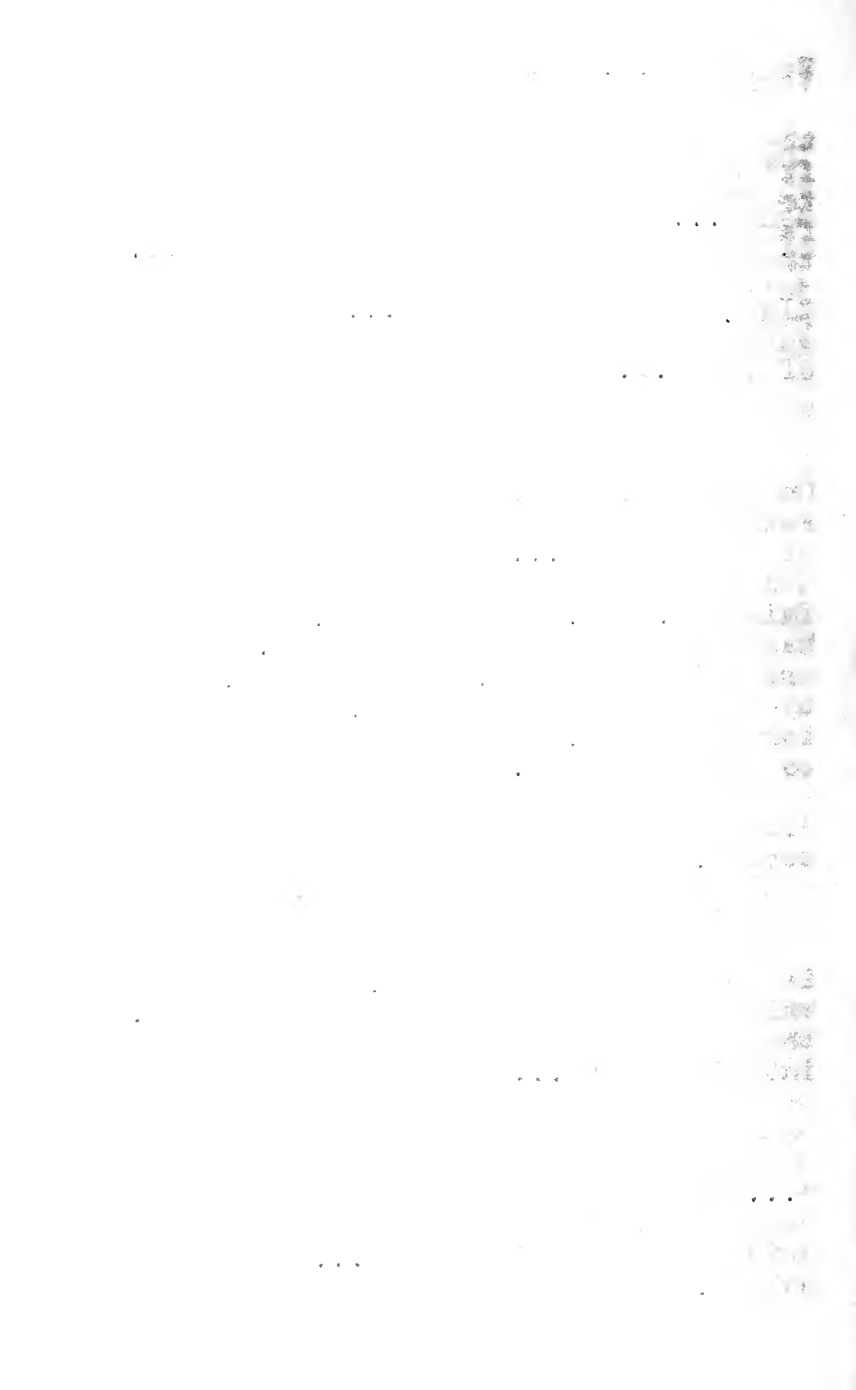
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On July 18, 1828, some days later, Father Tracol answered her in a letter of some length..."The commandments of God are the common pathway of all the faithful, but, besides this, each of us has a pathway outlined for him. Some are guided by fear, some by love, some by a desire to please God, some by zeal for His glory, and some by conformity to His holy will.

"These roads and pathways of God are secret, and He wishes us to study them with much care and attention. It is especially in meditation that Our Savior lets us know the degree of virtue which is most necessary for us, and the vice which we should particularly overcome. The attraction of grace is therefore an interior light...

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"...You must not be anxious any longer because at times you prefer prayer in private to that in common...If this were not so, we should have to condemn all

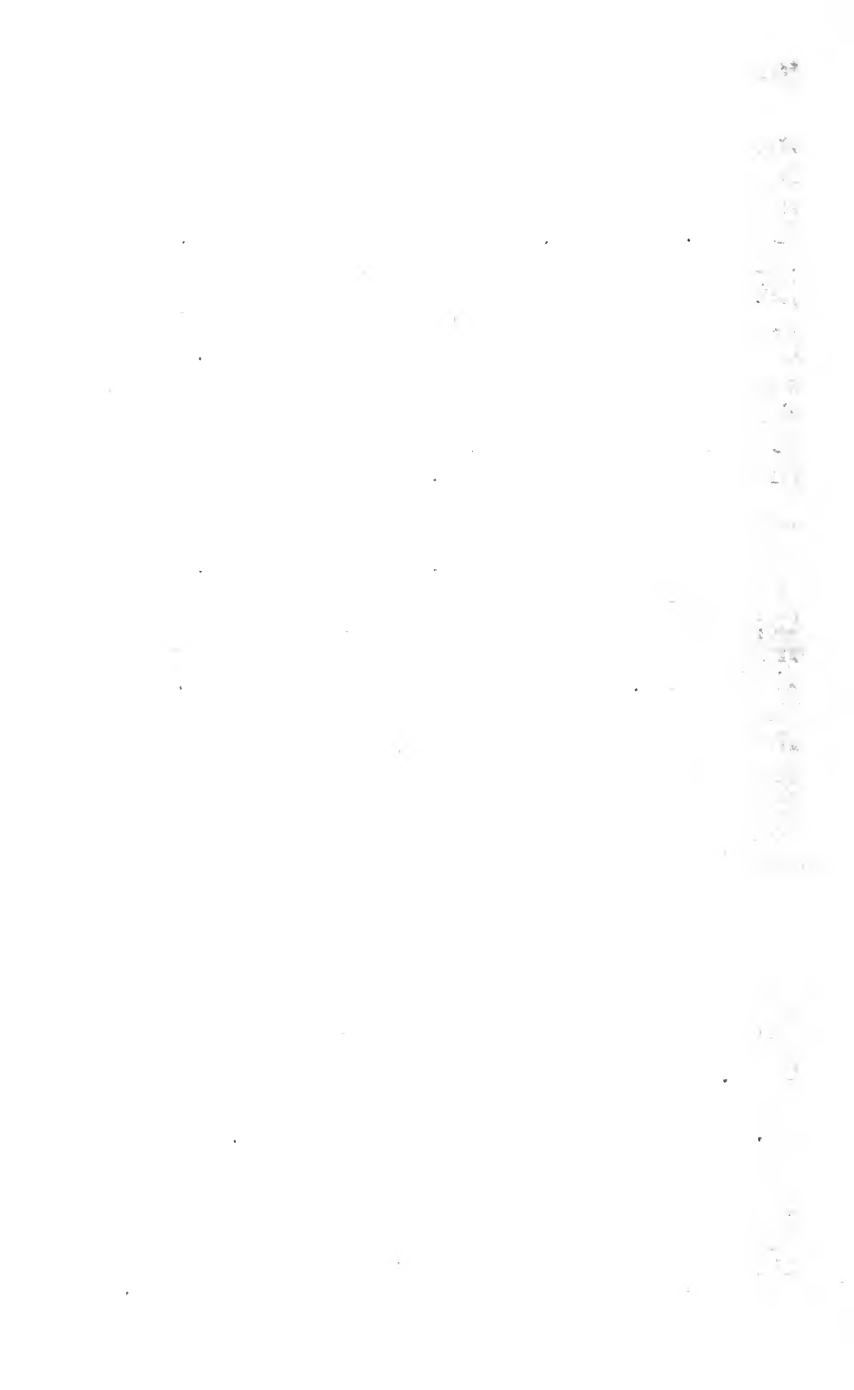


the holy solitaries who have retired from all intercourse with men in order to pray with more recollection and fervor. Still, I wish to add that, for the sake of good example, you should join your family and servants in the customary prayers, the more so as it is necessary to avoid singularity. Remember that Jesus Christ has said that, where two or three are gathered together in His name, there will He be in the midst of them.

"You say that you do not like the formulae of vocal prayer. Be careful, for the Church approves of it and commands it; and the divine office, which she orders to be sung or recited by her ministers, consists of it entirely. What more perfect prayer could you find than the 'Our Father', the psalms and numerous passages of the Holy Scriptures? Grace makes a marvellous use of these holy words to excite in our hearts the sentiments which they express..."

* * *

We cannot end this chapter in a better way than by giving portions of letters written by Father Tracol in 1830 and 1839, to a confrere whose name ought to be held in the greatest veneration by us. I speak of Father Deglesne. These are the only two letters to confreres we have been able to discover, though for more than forty years he wrote regularly to Father Fayolle, superior of Privas, and sometimes to Father Pages,



Father Polly and Father Deglesne whenever they were absent from Annonay... We consider them models of correspondence between members of the same religious family, anxious to aid one another in the great work of sanctification.

1st Letter. "You have been so fortunate, my dear confrere, as to make a retreat of eight days, and you tell me that you have taken the resolution of making our correspondence more edifying and profitable for both of us...Continue, I beg, to tell me freely what you think to be for the welfare of my soul. You are the younger, you say, and this makes you afraid to give advice; but think of the fact that I have offended God during more years than you have. In this I am not more worthy of regard and respect, and if I have any influence with you on account of my age, I order you to speak to me frankly and help me to save my soul..."

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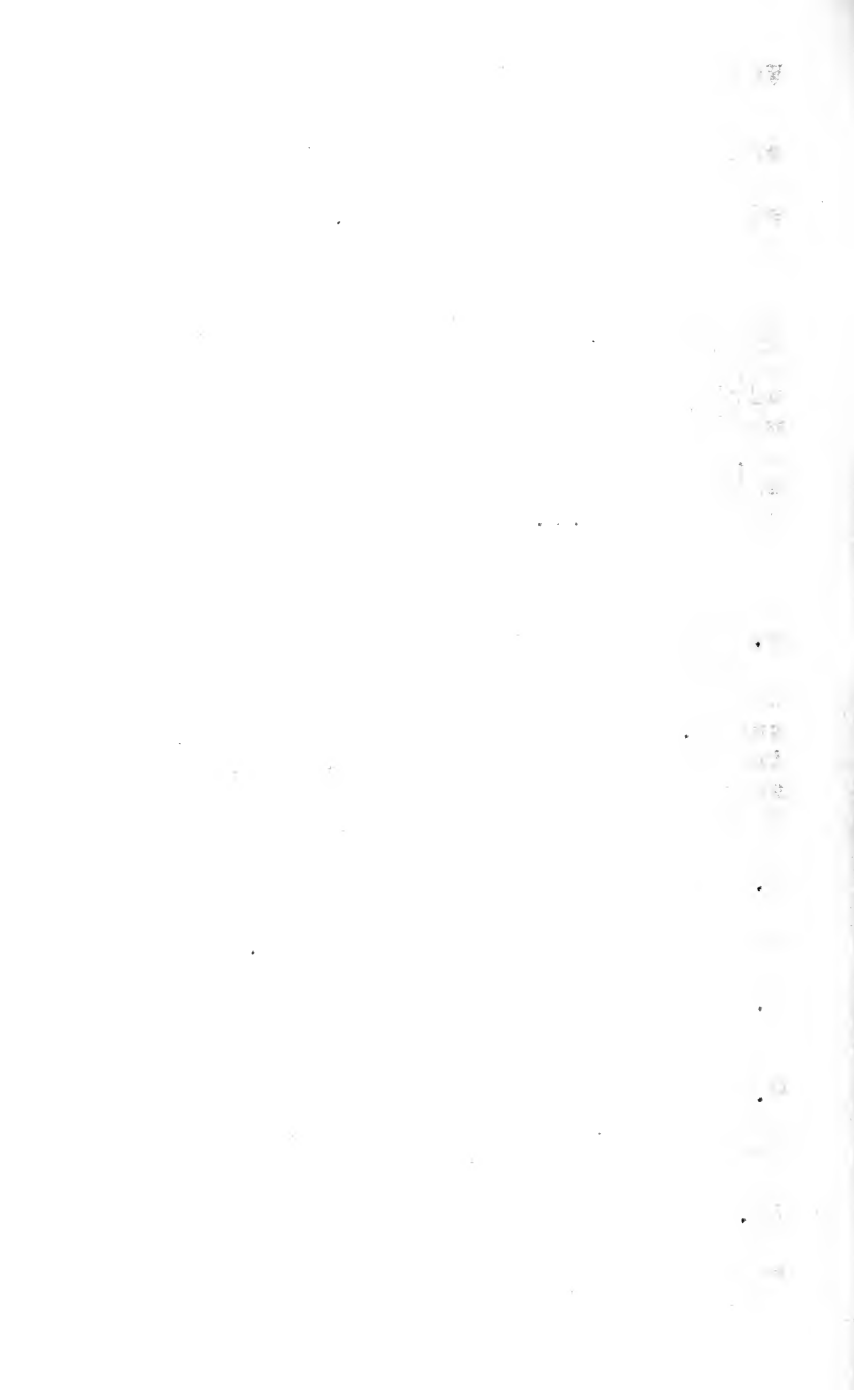
2nd letter. "You have been a great deal in my mind during these celebrations, my dear confrere, and I do not think that God will demand too close an account of these distractions, for I believe that they are in the order of Providence. He has been pleased to establish a relationship between us which I appreciate more and more every day on account of the advantages which I derive from it. Our

superiors permit it and authorize it, and we desire it only for the purpose of saving our poor souls."

* * *

3rd letter. "You ask me to send you by way of a New Year's gift some bits of advice on the hidden life, just as I would give them were we walking together, and to communicate the good thoughts which the Holy Spirit gives us for the common good...

6. We ought never to go into the town without saying a short prayer to the Blessed Virgin and our guardian angel. If our walk is to be long, or is liable to cause distraction, we should pay a visit to the Blessed Sacrament before leaving.
7. We ought not to stop to speak on the streets and we should avoid looking at what is going on around us.
8. We should not enter our confreres' rooms without some good reason.
9. We should avoid writing useless letters, and to this end, ask advice from our director.
10. We should not seek to examine into the conduct of others, or what concerns the management of the house...



11. We should speak with great moderation at the spiritual conferences which are customary among confreres, and fear lest some word escape us which may hurt the feelings of anyone.
12. When called to the parlor, we should say some prayer on the way thither; this is especially necessary when our visitors belong to the opposite sex.
13. We must have the crucifix continually before our eyes while studying, and glance at it from time to time, in order to recall the great lesson which we should learn before everything else..."

* * *

...The principal object of the fifth letter is the plan which the two friends formed of writing a set of meditations and pious exercises in honor of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, and refers to the life of Blessed Alphonsus Rodriguez, a member of the Society of Jesus, who was a model of gentleness, charity and patience in his humble position of porter.

* * *

We cannot conclude this chapter without making known a regret...We are sorry that Father Tracol did not extend his sphere of action in the community; that he did not like to direct such of his confreres as asked the favor of him, and did not exert that gentle and salutary influence over the younger members

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which age and the authority of virtue gave him, and which he applied so well to Father Deglesne, even before he became Master of Novices...Perhaps he was afraid to incur a responsibility which terrified him...We shall certainly not blame him, but we shall be content with putting on record, a simple, though strong and sincere regret.

* * *

P A R T 2

Interior Life



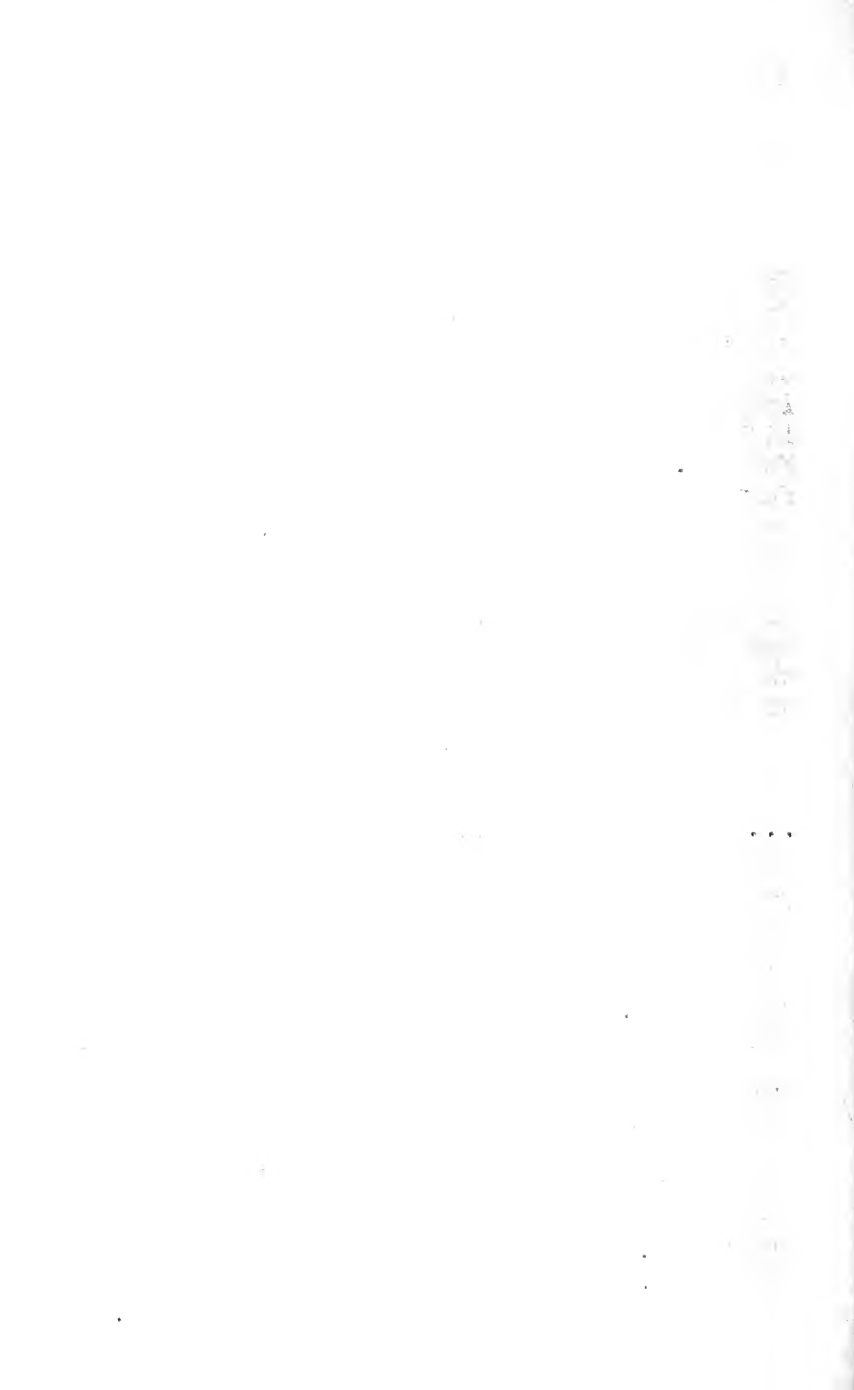
MEANS OF SANCTIFICATION

In the happy days of his youth, Father Tracol had the inestimable happiness of hearing the voice of God calling him to the priesthood, and with a holy enthusiasm had abandoned the whole of his life to the love and service of his Master. This was not the result of the fervor and generosity of boyhood, which so often fades away with time, but the manly resolution of a soul enlightened from above on the grandeur and beauties of the priesthood...We ought to thank our Savior for keeping for us a confrere who was destined to be one of our models of religious virtue...

* * *

...We shall speak...of his ideas and sentiments concerning the grandeur of the priestly vocation, for he drew from it encouragement to work harder in striving after perfection, and to raise himself more and more in the practice of virtue. We shall quote from an entry made in his journal on October 20, 1826.

"The priesthood of the New Law is a participation in the priesthood of Jesus Christ and an extension of it. The priest is destined to work a daily miracle greater than the creation of the universe. Once the sun obeyed the voice of Josue, but here it is God who becomes obedient to the voice of His minister.



Priests are the assistants, the co-operators of God, the proclaimers of His glory, the shepherds and fathers of the people...the savers of souls, the salt of the earth, the light of the world, etc...Everything about a priest should be holy, pure and innocent...

These thoughts which Father Tracol meditated on and set down in his journal, were the synopsis of a sermon of the venerable Father Polly, but those which follow are his own..."March 28, 1839 — Anniversary of my ordination to the priesthood.

"...St. John the Baptist, the greatest of all the sons of men, was not the light: non erat ille lux; but it is said to the priests of the New Law, vos estis lux mundi. 'Priests', says St. Prosper, "are the gates of the eternal city, through which all who wish to come to Jesus Christ will have to pass.".

Father Tracol here quotes other passages from the holy fathers or the ascetics, and then goes on to say: "Ten years ago, a creature so mean as myself received the wonderful power, not only of producing Jesus Christ on the altar, but even of offering and immolating Him to God the Father.

"...Even the power of offering every day and that during the whole of a career which is perhaps only yet a half or a third over; of offering what Jesus Christ

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offered only once at the Last Supper...

"March 28, 1832: — Anniversary of my ordination...

"It is a greater honor and glory for the priest to celebrate Holy Mass, were it only once, than to rule over all the empires of the earth.

"A man who was filled with the love of God and a desire for His glory, once said: "I wish that every word I speak, and every breath I take could produce infinite worlds and fill them with angels infinitely more perfect than those in heaven, so that they might praise, honor and thank God." And God made him understand that there was a means infinitely more noble and powerful for the fulfilment of his desire in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, in which the Son offers the Father a sacrifice so excellent and perfect, that it...renders Him as much praise and glory as He merits..."

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According as Father Tracol advanced in years and the path of perfection, we find him writing down...thoughts more frequently and vividly...

"Nov. 1, 1843: — I have lost a great deal of time and consequently there remains much to be done to become holy. I must not discourage myself, however,

but rather, trusting in the infinite goodness of God, employ well the little time I have left...A good method of making up for time lost...is to live in obedience."

* * *

Father Tracol was well aware that he could realize this desire for perfection ...only by long labor...and he knew that he would...fall more than once during this journey...He wrote the following in 1829: "The habit of virtue is not acquired in one day and must often fall before gaining our goal, but only to rise again. I must not be surprised, therefore, or discouraged at my failures. It is essential that we return promptly to God by contrition, love and confidence..."

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"Retreat, 1827 — I think it my duty to attack my great liberty of speech, for it is a life-long habit. It furnishes me with matter for nearly every confession, and I cannot manage to spend a single day...without saying something improper, whether it be in meaning, tone or manner...Hence, my innumerable distractions at meditation, the disedification I give my confreres by mistimed pleasantries, levity, impatience, want of charity and various infractions of the rule of silence."

"This fault is exterior and extremely injurious to the good example which I ought to set my neighbor, hence it is all the more necessary that I should fight it by the particular examen...

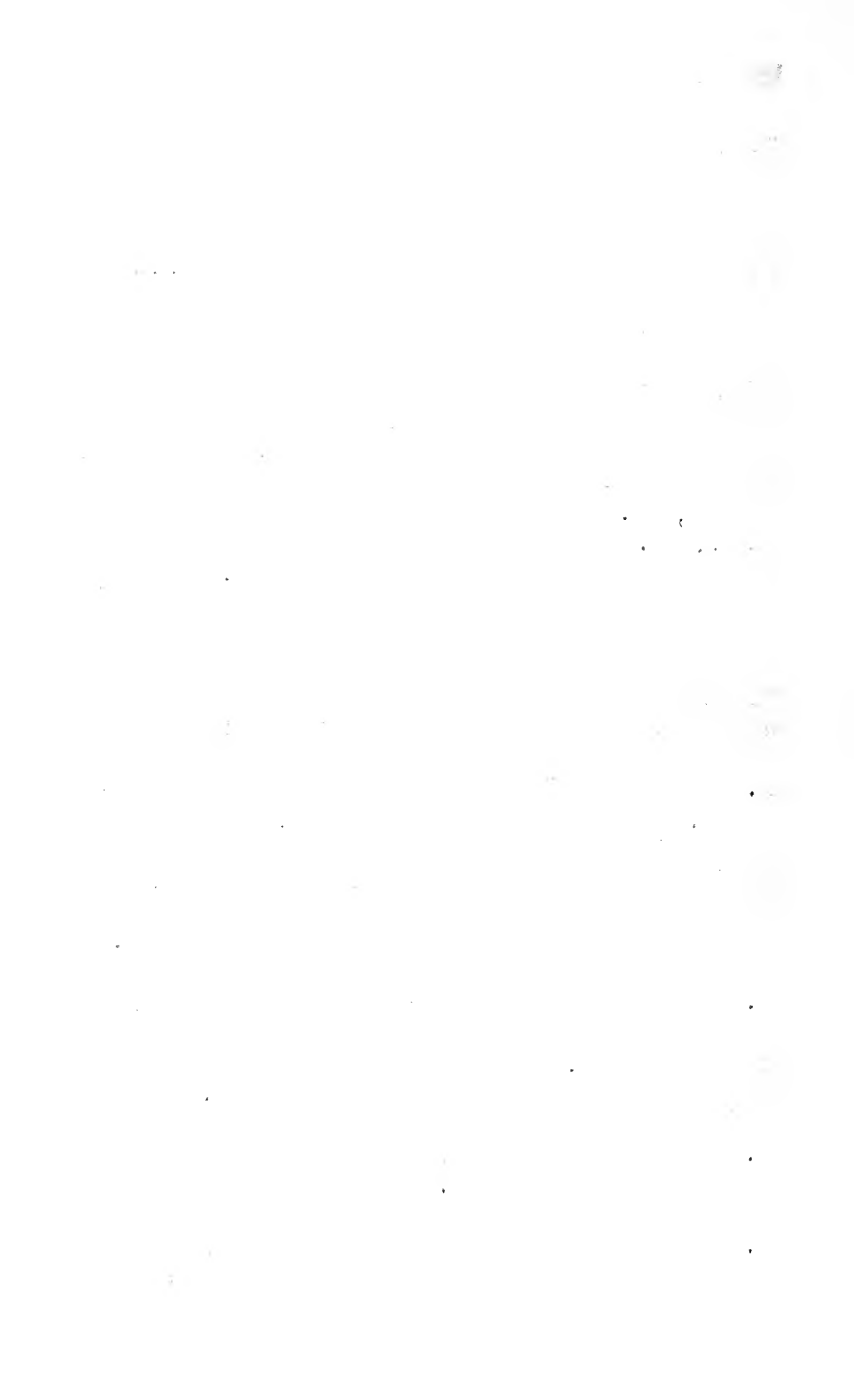
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"I shall make my particular examen at three different times, therefore, according to the example of St. Ignatius, namely: 1. In the morning before meditation, 2. After the Angelus at 11:30 a.m., 3. Between supper time and night prayer, or before going to bed.

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"I shall set down here some points on which I wish to examine myself:

1. Not to speak without necessity during the hours of silence, or indeed at any other time of the day except during recreations; and, above all, to observe the silence after night prayer until the hour of breakfast next day.
2. If there should be any necessity, either in the corridors or in the common room, to speak as little as possible and in a very low tone.
3. To speak gently, honestly and with much moderation.
4. To avoid jokes and buffonery, and not to turn others in ridicule.

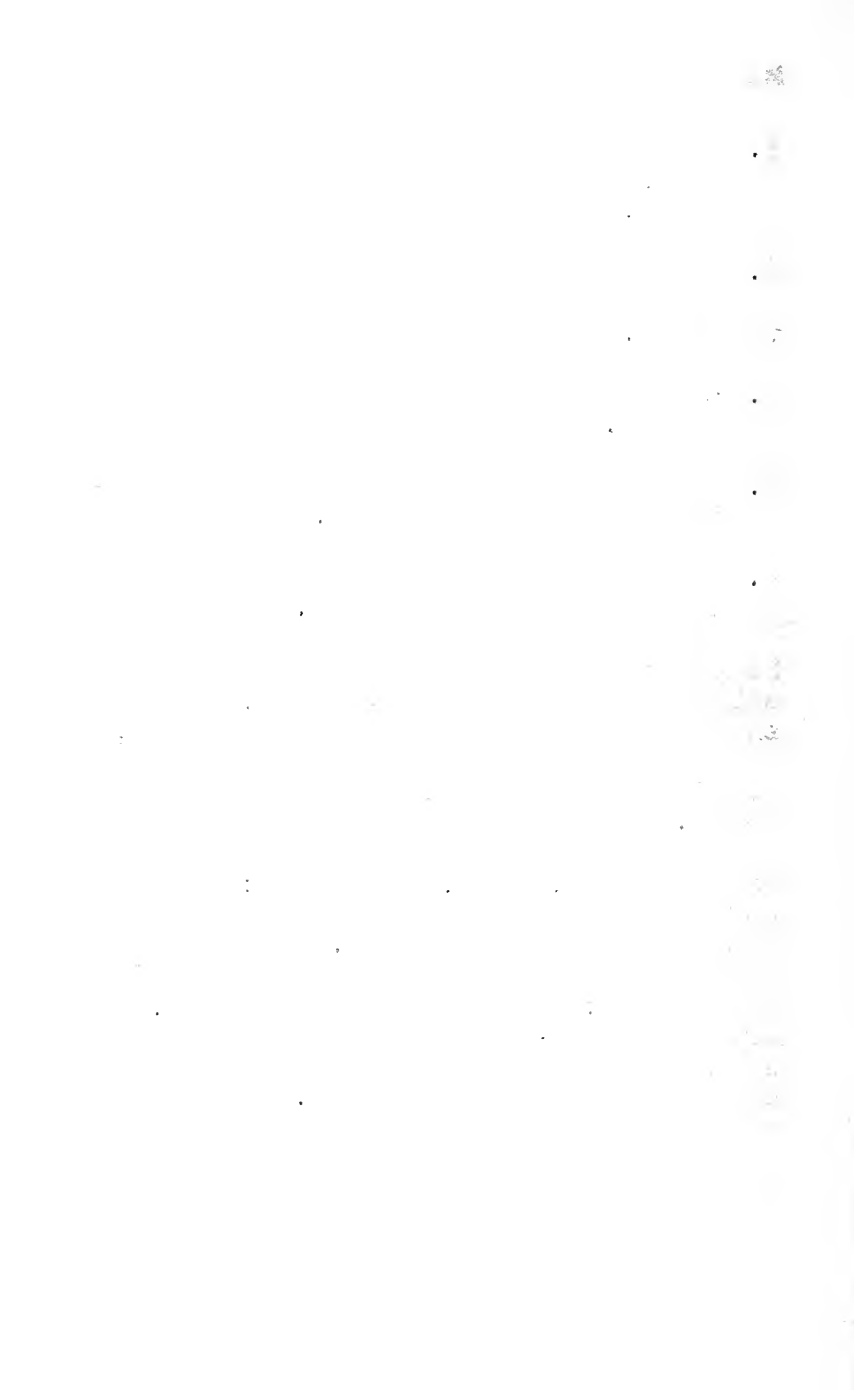


5. To be more self-possessed in my sermons, and not to make so many gestures.
6. Not to interrupt the conversation of others through indiscretion and vivacity.
7. To avoid all exaggerations in my speech.
8. Not to speak at our community meetings unless questioned.
9. Not to seek through curiosity to know insignificant news."

He continued to examine himself on this subject for many years. Then, in obedience to the commands of his director, he changed the subject of his examination at first every year, and later on every month.

On January 1, 1841, he writes: "I shall endeavor to perform my ordinary actions with special application. I have noticed two particular faults in this connection: my natural impetuosity, and frequent affectation and singularity. I shall make them the subject of my examen for the first month.

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If he was faithful all his life to... exactness...in his particular examen, what might be said of his love for mental prayer?...We can do not better than to let him speak for himself. He first treats of the necessity of mental prayer.

"Meditation is not an invocation of men, but of God Himself; for, as soon as He had given His law to His people, He commanded them above all things to meditate on it incessantly. It is for this reason that David commences the Psalms with the praise of those who practice this holy exercise. The Holy Ghost tells us through the mouth of Jeremias that the misfortunes of men come only through lack of meditation on the truths of salvation..."

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He next tells us what he understands by meditation. "For me, meditation does not consist in lofty thoughts, and still less in such as are good and salutary; but in the holy affections which ought to flow from them. So that, to meditate is to apply one's soul to the attentive consideration of the truths of salvation, so that one may excite himself to love them and to resolve to practice them."

He then makes the following answer to the objection which is so often made through spiritual sloth to the difficulty

of mental prayer. "Is it not strange that people should find difficult, and even impossible, what they are doing every day, and on all sorts of subjects, except that of salvation! Where is the merchant who does not think seriously and frequently on his business affairs...

"When we study or compose, do we not meditate and apply our minds to the penetration of some truth? Whence comes it that we meditate so often on pleasure, and do not endeavor to meditate on our salvation?..."

* * *

"Dec. 18, 1834: — When we commence to serve God, it seems to me that we need a great deal of exterior assistance, of methods and vocal prayer; but when we have become more experienced in mental prayer, and the exterior life, I do not think it very necessary to add to our vocal prayers and such other practices of the kind as are of precept or are in the rule; because we must set aside this time for our meditations...

"Good Friday, 1842: — I must make up by recollection and prayer for my remissness in other matters which concern the glory of God and the salvation of souls; for prayer is a great thing, and those who work less must pray more..."

* * *

...<Father Tracol> began with the simplest and commonest meditations, made regularly every day either with the community, or, when his occupations or his health made it impossible to join his confreres, in private. But his fidelity to all his duties soon received its recompense, even here below, and gave rise to a need of continual prayer, and, as it were, a thirst for recollection. In obedience to this attraction of grace, he devoted to meditation all the time which the duties of his state and his occupations left at his disposal. Thus he succeeded, little by little, in acquiring... a degree of contemplation which brought him sweet repose, and...joy to his soul.

It was not only to his exercise of mental prayer and the practice of the particular examen that Father Tracol owed his...progress in virtue, but also to the assistance which he received in spiritual reading and direction. From the year 1821, we find him attaching extreme importance to spiritual reading ... "Although I shall have very little time for spiritual reading, I must not forget that the Apostle recommended his disciple to apply himself to this exercise. Attende lectioni...I shall usually inform my director of the works I desire to read, especially when they are new to me. I shall generally give the pre-

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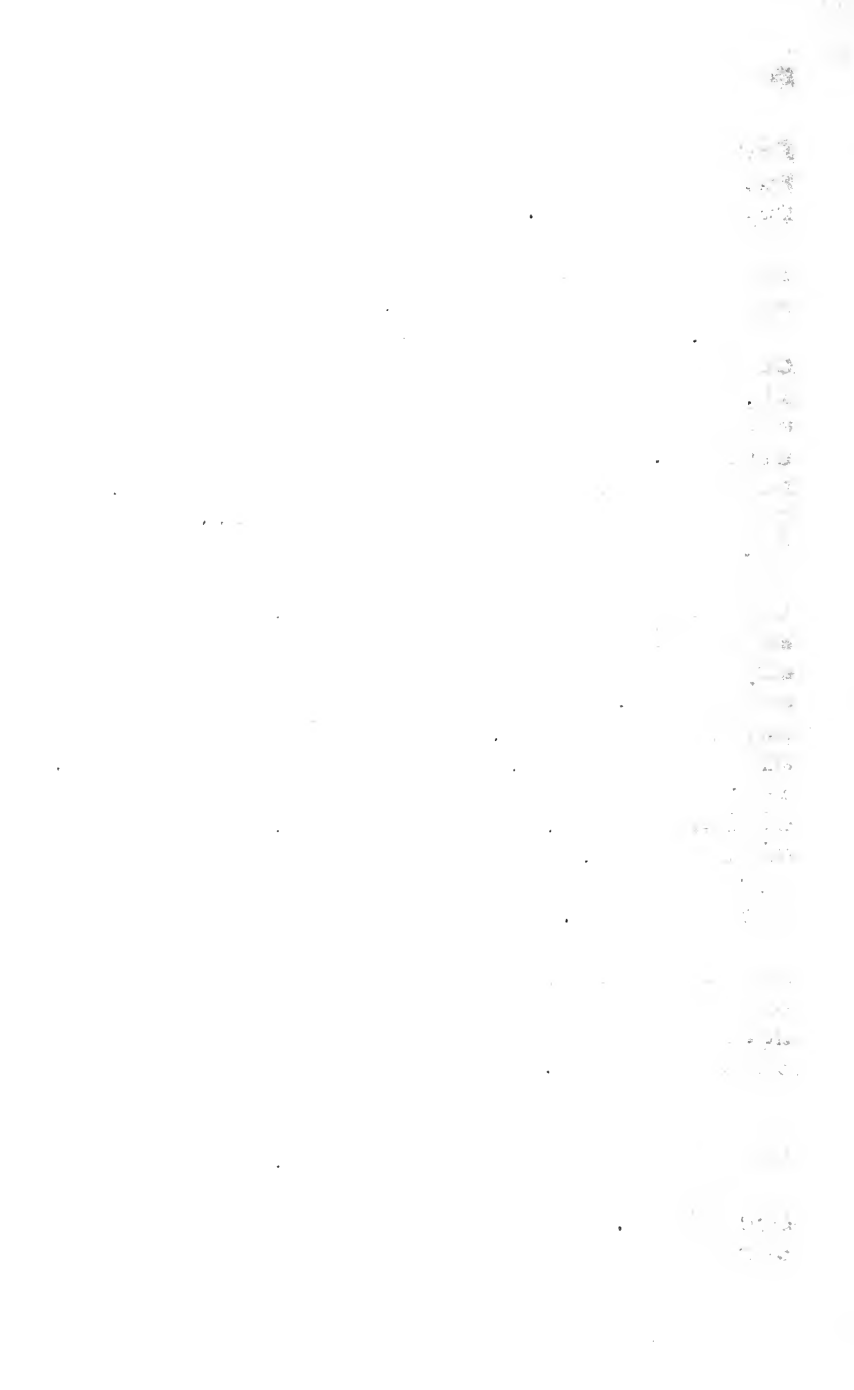
ference to the lives of the saints and such works as are in favor of the religious life."

The book which he loved above all others, as do all holy priests, was the Book of Books, the Holy Bible. He was desirous of becoming perfectly acquainted with it, and he resolved to study it in the Hebrew in order to learn the sense more clearly. This involved a long and tiresome labor, at least in the beginning, but he was rewarded in the end...

Father Tracol never allowed a single day to pass without reading one or two chapters of these divine letters, as much as an aid to piety as to commit to memory the truths which he had already meditated. He came to know a great portion by heart, as is evidenced by his meditations, sermons and conferences. They abound in extracts taken from this divine source, and are often, if we mistake not, but paraphrases of the scripture texts which refer to the subject at hand.

He also made a study of Italian with the intention of reading the numerous ascetic authors who have written in that language.

We are able to tell the pious authors to whom he was most attached, by reading the notes which he wrote on various occasions. First came the Holy Scriptures and the Imitation of Christ: Then



Father Lombey's treatise on Interior Peace; The Practice of Christian Perfection <by Rodriguez>, the Spiritual Combat <by Scupoli>, The Devout Life and other works of St. Francis de Sales, and lastly the works of Fenelon.

We are able to discover from some notes which he wrote in 1871 the principal reasons why spiritual reading is badly made, and why we often derive no profit from it.

"1. Because we are not happy in our choice. All foods are not good for all persons. There are some, however, which suit everyone, such, for example, as bread. So there are some books from which everyone may derive profit, such as the Imitation. But we imagine that these works are too well known, and we prefer others which are less solid, because they are more pleasing to our curiosity and imagination.

"2. We read too much, and meditate too little. Once we have read a book, we do not wish to go over it again. The great secret of becoming holy, like that of becoming wise, is to devote ourselves to one book and go over it again and again...

"3. We apply what we read, not to ourselves, but to others...We shall always find something to take for ourselves, if we wish sincerely to become better and not flatter ourselves.

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"4. We sometimes wish to do all that we read about and take too many resolutions; thus we fail by excess of good. In thus desiring too much, we succeed in nothing. We must know what is the ailment which affects our heart, examine it and seek to cure it. Books are the medicine of the soul. When we overcharge our stomach with food, no matter how excellent it may be, we cannot digest it. Therefore, we should first insist on what is most necessary for us."

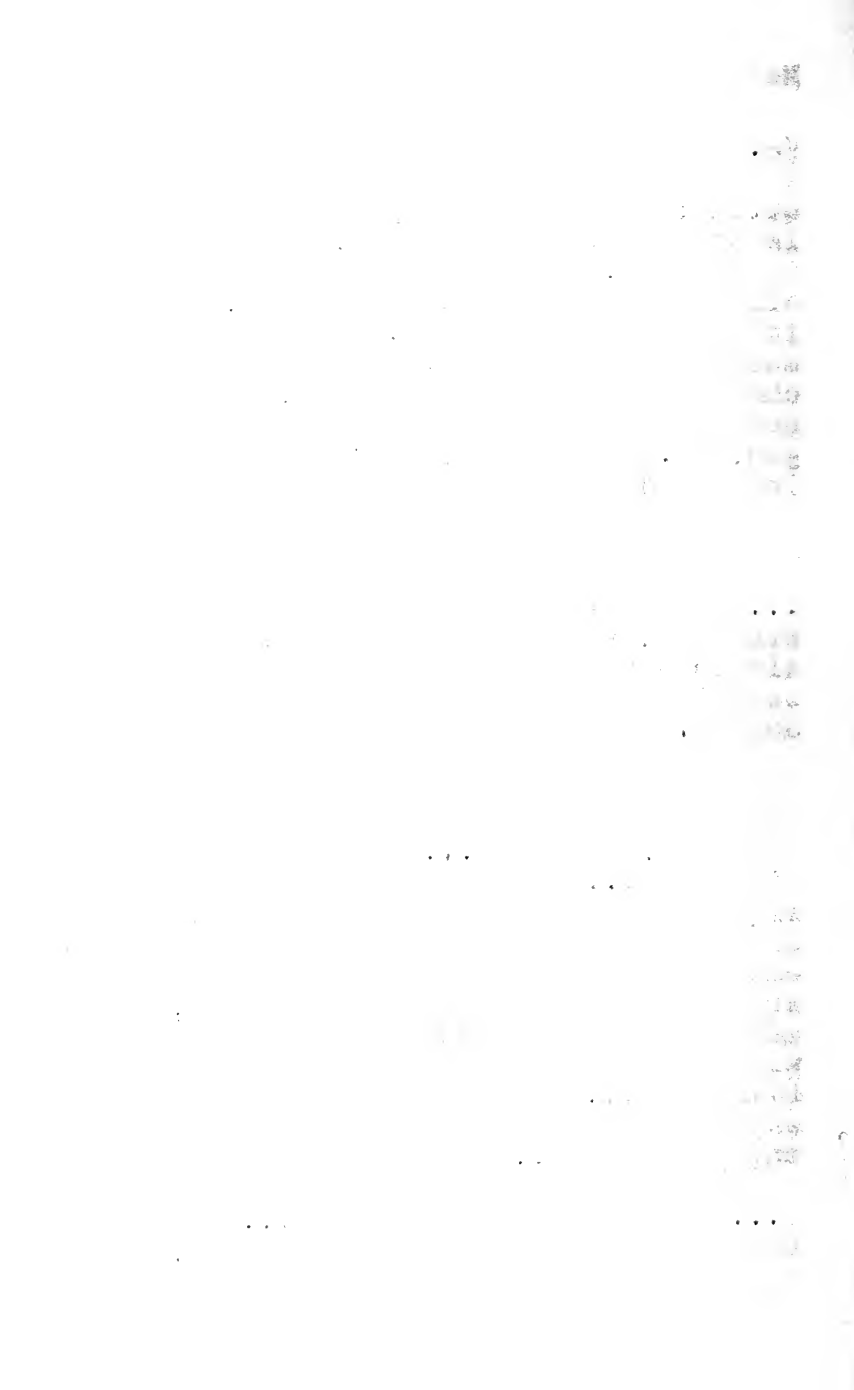
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...We believe that he never read a single book through curiosity, or a single work which did not treat of teaching or the performance of his duties.

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From some beautiful passages in his writings, we learn...the importance of direction..."If we have a serious and frank desire to advance in virtue, we frequently feel the necessity of a guide. Such an aid, which no one in the ordinary course of affairs can overlook, is more indispensable for certain persons whose imagination is more liable to blindness...How many lag behind in the way of God because they are not sufficiently directed...

"...Our choice of <director>...must not be influenced by some petty motive, a



passing enthusiasm, an external impulse, a momentary fervor; for this is a need which makes itself strongly felt only after much prayer and reflection...

"Respect...confidence and docility are the duties we owe our director. We open our hearts, our director speaks and what is there for us to do except to obey...We must, therefore, permit ourselves to be guided..."

* * *

...Ordinarily he set down in his diary the advice he received from his director, and we frequently find such entries as the following: "1838 — Advice received on Nov. 16: 1. Not to seek to notice the faults of my confreres and to excuse them. 2. To demand frequent pardon from God for my sins..."

* * *

Father Tracol wished to make frequent general confessions, but his directors were afraid of his tendency towards scruples, and did not think it proper to allow him to make them as often as he wished. He was happy, however, when they permitted him this privilege, as may be gathered from his own words: "Oct. 3, 1841 — I began the feast of St. Michael with a general confession, which I had the happiness to complete on October 2, the feast of the Holy Angels..."

"I have been asking for the favor for a long time, and it was granted me when I least expected it. Thus it is seen that sooner or later God grants me what I ask. May it please His divine bounty to grant me to draw profit from these humiliating recollections of the past...

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Among the greatest of...blessed days... he placed the annual retreats. When a young priest, he had imposed upon himself an annual retreat of eight days, so that it was a great joy for him when this custom became a fixed rule in the community in 1822.

He generally prepared for his retreat by a meditation on the advantages of this holy exercise...

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On the eve of his retreat in 1830, he wrote: "There are four things to consider and arrange for when we commence a retreat: 1. the need we have for it; 2. the dispositions with which we ought to commence it; 3. the order to be kept... 4. the pious practices with which we must sanctify it, one of which might well be the choice of a special patron for each day."

Some of these articles are evidently applicable to private retreats only;

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but we must not overlook the fact that, for many years Father Tracol made a special retreat of from three to eight days at the beginning of each vacation under the direction of one of his friends, a chaplain at Lyons, to whom he had...given his complete confidence. It was in some way the prelude and preparation for the community retreat. The following passage is a proof of his love for these...retreats: "The retreats which we make in common are...very useful, for there is mutual edification, attendance at the exercises, and a union of heart and voice in prayer; all of which cannot fail to produce great effect...."

* * *

<Father Tracol> found the monthly retreat a powerful help towards preserving and increasing the spiritual health and strength he had gained during the annual retreat. These shorter resting places helped him to put into practice ...the resolutions he had made at the long retreat...

We shall endeavor to learn from his own words how...he spent these days of prayer and recollection.

The following entry was made in 1828:
"Practice for a monthly retreat:

1. Preparation for death; hence, make my confession on the eve as though

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about to die, and accuse myself, at least in a general manner, of the faults of the past month. The next day, receive Holy Communion as though it were Viaticum, and endeavor to gain some plenary indulgence and to apply it. Try to perform the principal actions of the day in a holy manner as though each were to be the last of my life. In the evening the prayer and act of preparation for death.

2. Spend half an hour during the day or more in examining what progress I have made and what faults I have committed during the past month, my predominant passion and the attraction of grace which it is most essential I should know. Foresee what I ought to do during the coming month, the opportunities I shall have for practicing virtue, or falling into sin, so as to seek the former and avoid the latter.

3. Spend more time at spiritual reading and preserve the greatest recollection during the whole day...

* * *

...It now remains for us to show how he carried it out. This is best done by referring to the account of his monthly retreats which he entered in his diary...

* * *

"Aug. 30, 1840:— Feast of St. Julien, and retreat — I must reproach myself on certain subjects of the past month concerning the superior. I have allowed my dislike for travelling to be seen too easily, I have wished to complain of the annoyance caused me by the infirmity of a confrere. I have not always behaved with that respect which is inspired by holy obedience. What is the use also of complaining of the little sicknesses which Providence sends me and which do not prevent me from doing my work?...

"This reminds me of the agreement I have made, and badly kept, not to permit anyone to see what would cause me pain or pleasure...This is a form of martyrdom which God expects from me. I ought to wish for everything and to wish for nothing; and by this habit of self-renunciation, I shall make progress in religious obedience, in the interior life and the life of recollection...

"A course of reading in the treatise On Conformity to the Will of God, by Rodriguez, would be very useful in this connection...

"I shall have a more special devotion to the Holy Angels and Our Lady Queen of Angels, doing all I can to set a good example...

"If obedience imposes certain works of zeal on me, such as retreats, exhort-

ations, etc., I shall make up my mind, and endeavor to gain some profit from what I say to others; finding consolation in the thought that I have the happiness of doing the holy will of God. I shall also try to make myself useful in the house, show kindness to my confreres and keep the rule perfectly.

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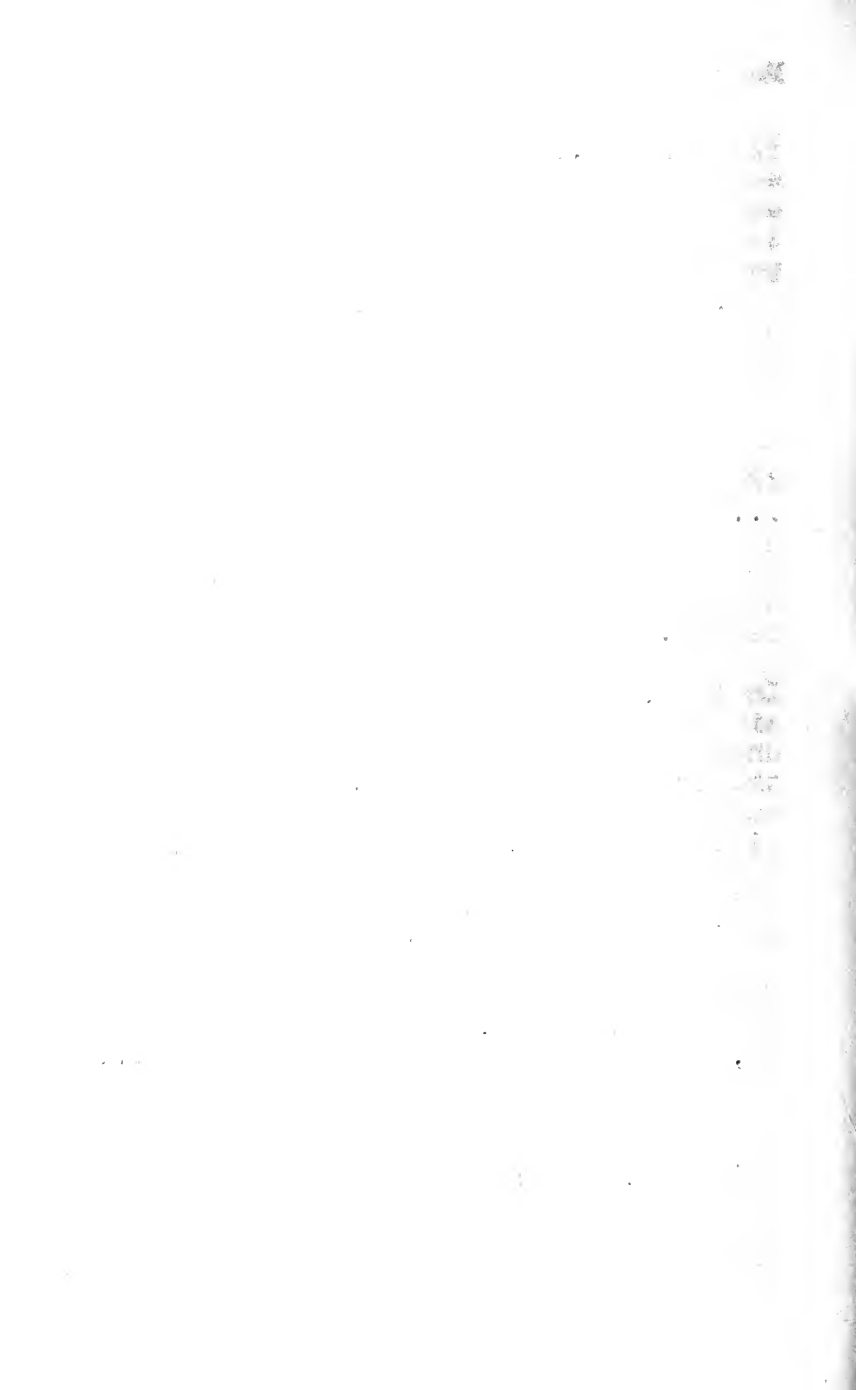
<Father Tracol was> zealous and fervent ...in uniting his own feelings with those of the Church when preparing for the great mysteries of our religion, and during the celebration of the solemn feasts.

In 1829, he wrote: "I shall make it my aim to enter into the spirit of the Church during the various periods of the ecclesiastical year. I might find assistance in this practice in the little book written by the Jesuit, Father Guimont, and called Plan of Spiritual Conduct, and in Father Croizet's Christian Year."

Father Tracol appreciated the latter volume very much, and often made use of it, as may be seen from his journal...

* * *

Epiphany, 1840: "I must not forget to make three visits to the Savior today, to offer Him each of the three gifts of which those of the Magi were figures...



"I shall offer up special prayers to-day for my director, for I find his advice like the rays of the star. It is a gentle and pure light which brings peace and happiness to the heart..."

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...The solemn feasts and great periods of the ecclesiastical year each supplied him with many subjects for meditation... His pious reflections...were strengthened still more by the precious lessons...received in the celebration of the feasts of the Blessed Virgin and the saints.

In fact, these feasts became for Father Tracol the occasion of meditations, and of spiritual studies on the example in virtue which these holy persons set the world, and on the means he ought himself to employ in imitating and following them...

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Nov. 21, 1839: "Presentation of Our Lady..."

"I shall renew today my vow of chastity, the promise of obedience made to the Community, and the resolutions I took at the retreat..."

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"1840. Feast of St. Basil: Mea maxima poenitentia vita communis. It often

costs more than one would at first imagine to live entirely in community; yet this is the penance which Our Savior essentially demands of us. For this we must have character and courage, make a generous sacrifice of our body, and fight against our tastes and inclinations. Unless we do this, we cannot rest always under the yoke of the rule...The true religious spirit, the spirit of our glorious patron, consists in making ourselves remarkable for nothing but the greatest regularity.

"To this must be added patience and indulgence for the little infirmities of our brethern..."

* * *

...The anniversaries which he celebrated so regularly were, his first Communion, confirmation and ordinations.

We shall quote some passages from a long meditation which he made on the anniversary of his First Communion in 1826. "Oh that the time would come when I shall live no more, but that Jesus Christ would come and live in me... May I no longer live a common and ordinary life...but may Jesus live in me; may He think, act, suffer, speak, instruct, pray in me, etc..."

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"St. Vincent Ferrers, in the last chapter of his Treatise on the Spiritual Life, asserts that there will one day be people whose entire affections, sentiments and words will end in Jesus Christ. May this prophecy be fulfilled in me, Oh My God, and in all my confreres! May our little Community have no other aim than to increase daily in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ! May our sole ambition be to live His life and to establish it in others! "

"July 19, 1841: Today is the anniversary of my ordination to the subdiaconate. In reading over the prayers of the pontifical and the admonitions given by the Bishop, I was held longer by what he remarks when he gives the amice: *Accipe amictum per quem designatur castigatio vocis*. How many sins could I have avoided, how many interior troubles and annoyances I could have saved myself by watching more carefully over my tongue!...

"March 6, 1835: Anniversary of my ordination to the Diaconate. In reading over the prayers of the pontifical for the ordination of deacons, I observed that the bishop requires particularly interior peace and holy liberty. I have not sought as much as I should to establish this tranquility, this peace, this joy of the Holy Ghost in my soul...

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"March 28, 1840: Anniversary of my ordination to the Priesthood...If I am the minister, the co-operator, the representative of Jesus Christ, I ought to act as He did...

* * *

"August 16, 1838:— We lost our venerable superior (Father Lapierre) this morning at three o'clock. I owe him a large debt of gratitude for the excellent advice he has given me during the long period in which I was under his direction. He spoke very little, but what he did say was solid, and worthy of meditation. His manner was truly paternal and his calm and correct method of looking at things was marvellously successful in soothing my imagination. He gave me a rule against scruples which I must never forget if I wish to honor his memory... He exacted obedience, and this remedy would have produced quite a different result if I had followed it with more simplicity and generosity.

"August 17:— We have performed our last sad duty towards our common father. I celebrated the Holy Sacrifice in presence of the coffin in which he lay. During my thanksgiving, which I made near the body form which the soul had departed, I recalled what St. Ignatius said about obedience: that we should be as dead bodies and have no movements except those derived from holy obedience...

"June, 1841:— On Thursday last, beside the deathbed of my venerated father, Father Duret, I read in the work of a master learned in the spiritual life, "We attain to God by annihilating self...If I wish to die like this holy priest, whose loss we all deplore, I must succeed in changing from what I am to what God wishes me to be. Would that I might become as insensible to all earthly things as this corpse which has inspired me with these serious reflections.

"April 8, 1847: Today we have lost our confrere and dean, Father Payan, who has fallen asleep in Our Lord. He was very fond of repeating the exclamation, "How good God is; this is a never ending source of meditation." "How differently do we see things when about to appear before God", he exclaimed on the day on which he received the last sacraments.

"This holy priest has set us a splendid example of piety, and his continual prayers have drawn great blessings down on us. Such of us as have a little more free time, ought to devote to prayer and visits to the Blessed Sacrament the moments during which they are not called elsewhere by their duties."

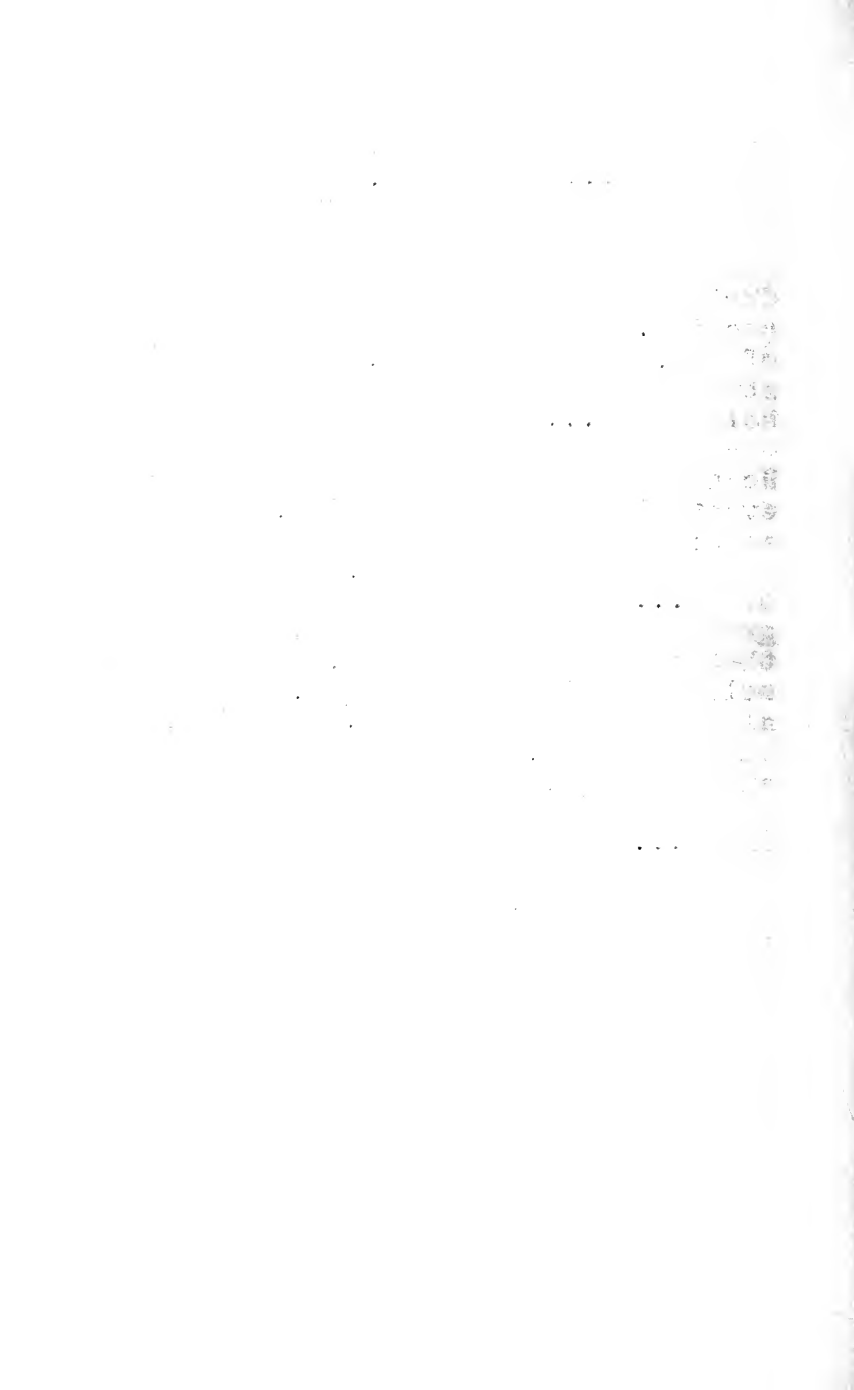
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"January, 1847: At about half past eleven on the fifth of this month, I

lost my beloved father, who was eighty years old....This trial, which is certainly one of the greatest Providence could send me, is mingled with others which have come one upon the other since Christmas, and which I was far from expecting. I ought to adore the designs of God, and study them, humbly asking at the same time for light from the Holy Ghost..."

He now goes on to describe many edifying events in his father's life, and then adds: "I must imitate the example which has been before my eyes, and make use of it....It is a fresh opportunity which grace has placed before me, in order that I may forget myself, and make myself all things to all men, and gain all men to Jesus Christ. Timidity, human respect, attachment to my habits and comforts, must never prevail over the obligations which charity imposes on me..."

* * *



THE LOVE OF GOD

Fenelon tellus that our life here below must be a novitiate of love. Our dear confrere desired firmly and emphatically to realize this thought of the Archbishop of Cambrai. No one who knew him will contradict...when we say that every hour of his long life was consecrated by love to the service of God.

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Here is what he wrote at the end of the retreat in 1826:— "Amasme? What, Oh my God, ought I to answer to this question, which Thou proposest to me at the end of these holy exercises?...

"O my Savior, if I loved Thee, I should have continual fear of displeasing Thee, I should spend my whole time in studying and foreseeing Thy most adorable will. I should suffer willing for Thee, I should be full of joy at my trials...I should be more gentle, cordial and charitable towards my neighbors, I should have a holy indifference for all the employments of the community...If I loved Thee, I should not tire of mental prayer...

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It is another characteristic of...love that the soul which loves not only fears to displease the person loved, but, wishes in some way never to be separated from him. In the beginning of the year 1838 <Father Tracol> renewed the offering of himself to God in the following words: "I desire, O my God, to be absolutely and perfectly united with Thee, and that all that is whithin me may honor Thee unceasingly...

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The soul which loves God assuredly lives by faith..."March 28, 1841. Anniversary of my ordination to the priesthood. The subject of my meditation this morning was a life of faith...the life of a priest should be a life of faith...A priest who lives by faith, does nothing by routine, habit or like a machine. He feels, understands...what he says to others...

"He does what so many others do, but he does it in such a way as to command admiration. The spirit of faith directs and animates his actions..."

Another peculiarity of divine love is that it gives the person who loves, patience, strength, courage, and even joy in suffering and tribulation...

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The following lines will tell us with what eagerness and love he welcomed the cross and suffering. "May 3, 1831: Far from seeking the cross, the world puts forth effort to avoid it. It is the enemy of the cross...And I...priest of Jesus Christ ought to seek the cross with a holy eagerness, and consequently to embrace it lovingly...Thanks be to God, I can find the cross, if I seek it, in every one of my actions, even the most indifferent.

"...It is vain to believe that we love Jesus Christ if we do not love the cross; vain to seek Him without the cross; for Jesus and the cross are inseparable...The saints have all been greedy for the cross...We must, therefore, accept our share with generosity and, like them, seek happiness and consolation in suffering and the cross."

The love of Father Tracol for the cross did not consist only in thoughts...it passed little by little into his actions and life...thanks to such frequently renewed resolutions as the following: "Lent 1858: I must receive thankfully, and with calmness and resignation, all my daily contradictions and troubles as coming from God, and as an obligation of fulfilling His designs by a penance which I otherwise practice so little."

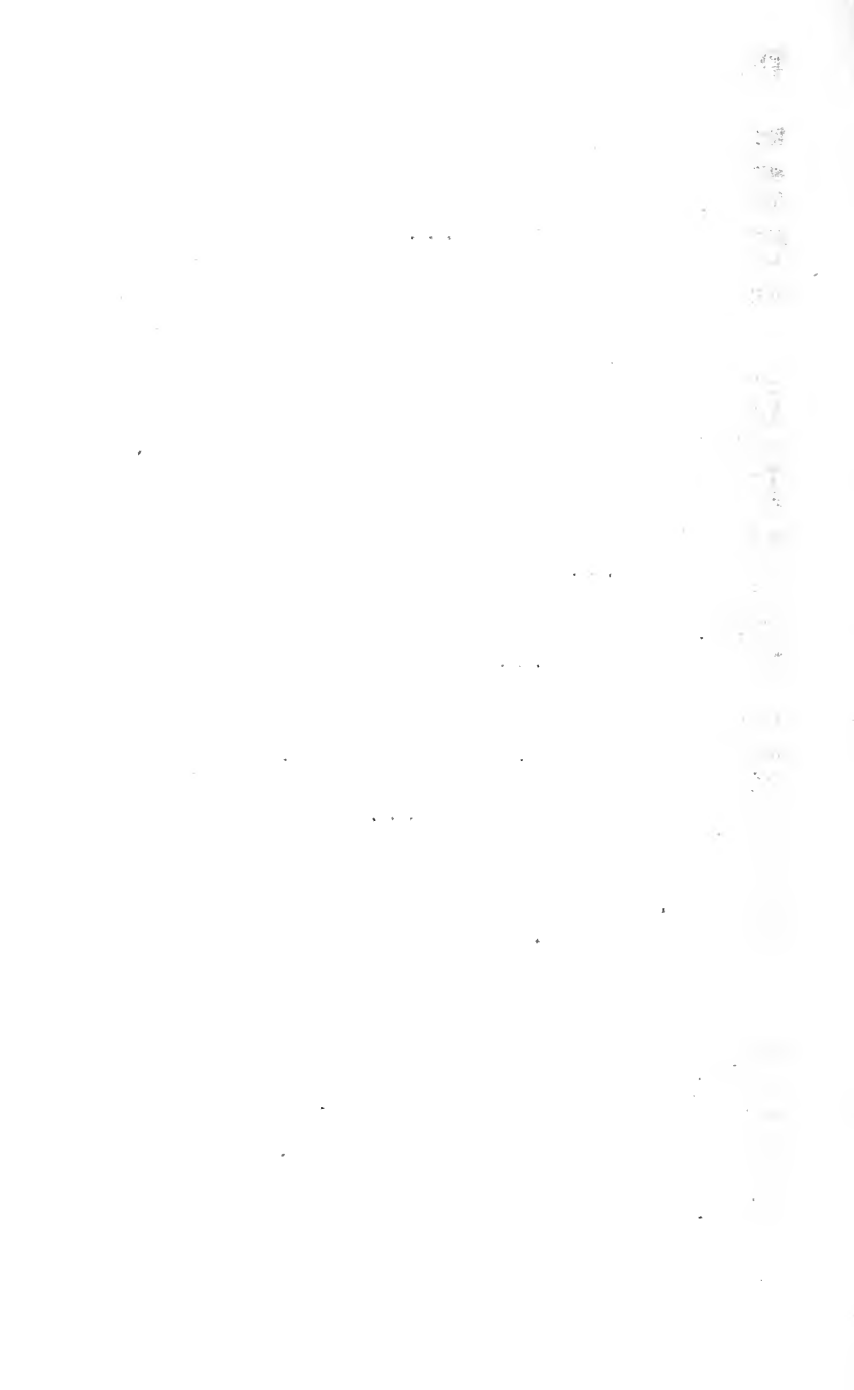
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His health, which had always been feeble and unreliable since his sickness in 1827, forbade him corporal punishment and austerity; and...was rarely strong enough to permit the lenten fast; but he was ingenious in making up for it. He liked to repeat the words of St. Berchmans, 'mea maxima poenitentia, vita communis'; and he endeavored to live a perfect community life in the spirit of penance and mortification. In the regularity of this life he found innumerable opportunities for crucifying his will, his self love and even his flesh...During the whole year he liked to deny himself in the matter of food, deserts which were not injurious to his health...

"One can certainly mortify himself much more by taking, for example, certain kinds of food at dinner, and limiting himself as to others...and always do it in such a way as to mortify the natural desires without letting anyone see it. This is the grand secret of mortification."

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"Fervent persons are industrious in seeking the means of denying self and of suffering without letting others suspect it most of the time. While apparently living a simple and ordinary life, they know the secret of carrying



the cross without ever putting it aside. In other words, they leave their cross to Providence, just as they do for the necessities of life. This is their daily bread, and God never permits it to be wanting..."

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<Father Tracol> found a...source of affliction...in the...attachment of his mother and many other members of his family to the heresy of Calvin. Indeed sickness left him from time to time, but the pain which afflicted his priestly heart at seeing his relations ...in error never ceased, and this cross was certainly one of the most difficult which he had to bear. We find a graphic description of his innermost thoughts and sufferings in his journal.

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On December 1st, 1827, he made the following plaintive supplication, "How can I open the eyes of certain people in whom I ought to be specially interested! What must I do to gain their confidence, dissipate their prejudices, and bring the light of truth to their souls?...Oh my God, The providence has its moments, but deign to hasten those which Thou hast appointed for the conversion and return of these persons,

who are so dear to me. May Thy light enable them to read my heart and see the aim of my intentions for their true happiness and eternal salvation.'"

In 1829, he thought that the providential moment had come and was resolved to do all that he could do to bring about a conversion he so ardently desired....On February 11, 1829, he wrote this passage in his journal: "On January 21, I received a letter from the Protestant minister of this town which was provoked by one I had written to my sister on the thirteenth. (She had been brought up in the Protestant faith by her mother). In this way I found myself involved in a discussion, and I have made up my mind to follow it up..."

He next describes the plan of the controversy which he was about to undertake, and then continues: "But it is useless, as I have already said, to plunge into controversy if grace does not touch the heart..."

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...The first letter was addressed to his sister in the beginning of January, 1829, and was the cause of the controversy.

"Providence has permitted me, my dear sister, to hear of some of your actions

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which have been inspired by ill advised zeal...What need is there...of this shower of insidious tracts, the work of the mind of man, which have been scattered everywhere by handfuls, hawked about the countryside, thrown in through the doors of houses, and even placed under the pillows of people's beds?...

"Certain Protestants, or rather, the greater number, have gone so far in our day, as to cast faith aside and make religion consist of works and morals. You fall into the opposite extreme, and your religion consists entirely of faith while you reject the merit and efficacy of good works.

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"If I have suffered some expression to escape in this long letter which might cause you pain, I know that you are virtuous enough not to be offended, and I seize the opportunity to thank you for the daily services which you render me so kindly and so eagerly. I beg that you will continue them, and hope that my remonstrances will not in any way change our mutual relations of charity and affection. I can reassure you on my side, and I hope that you will do the same for me by a reply."

We shall now quote some passages from the letter which his sister wrote in reply on January 19. "I have been

longing for an opening for some time, my dear brother, and I thank Our Savior that He has permitted it to arrive...

"I think, and it is my duty to believe it, that you are sincere in what you have done; so that, far from being angry at the tone with which you have spoken, I feel, on the contrary, a great charity and offer thanks to God. I know that for myself I am incapable of any good; but I know that he who knows Jesus possesses all good. That is why, after seeking His aid, I am going to write you a few lines.

"Listen, I beg, and lay aside all prejudice. You reproach me with having scattered tracts, and you say that we are inconsistent in our principles... You tell me that my father is grieved at all this. My father should look into things. He cannot disapprove, and no one has any right to command my conscience. I am sorry to see that you have not understood what saving faith is, doubtless because you were prejudiced when you read these writings.

..."I hope, I beg that God will grant you to read, and meditate on His holy word with humility, confidence and submission. May this holy word capture you completely, for it is more penetrating than a two-edged sword,.. In conclusion, I ask you to read this letter in the presence of God. As to your

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propositions, I think that someone who is better educated than I am will satisfy you better, and I hope to see it. They do not seem to be so difficult to answer, but my pastor has only forestalled my conviction. Do not spare me, but write as often as you wish. It is for the glory of God that I labor."

...A controversy was started between <Father Tracol and the minister. It was long and severe...

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Feb. 10, 1830: "Before posting the letter I am sending to Mr. P—, and it will no doubt be the last, since he wished to stop the discussion which he began himself...I have thought it well that you should read it. You will see for yourself that I have carefully avoided assuming a tone which could hurt his feelings...

"I consent, therefore, to conclude a discussion which you have provoked and for which I hoped a happier conclusion; and I stop the more readily because you did not answer the last letter I sent you, in which I asked you if you would consent to abandon your principles if I could get Mr. P— to admit certain assertions which you marked or other similar assertions which you might propose to me.

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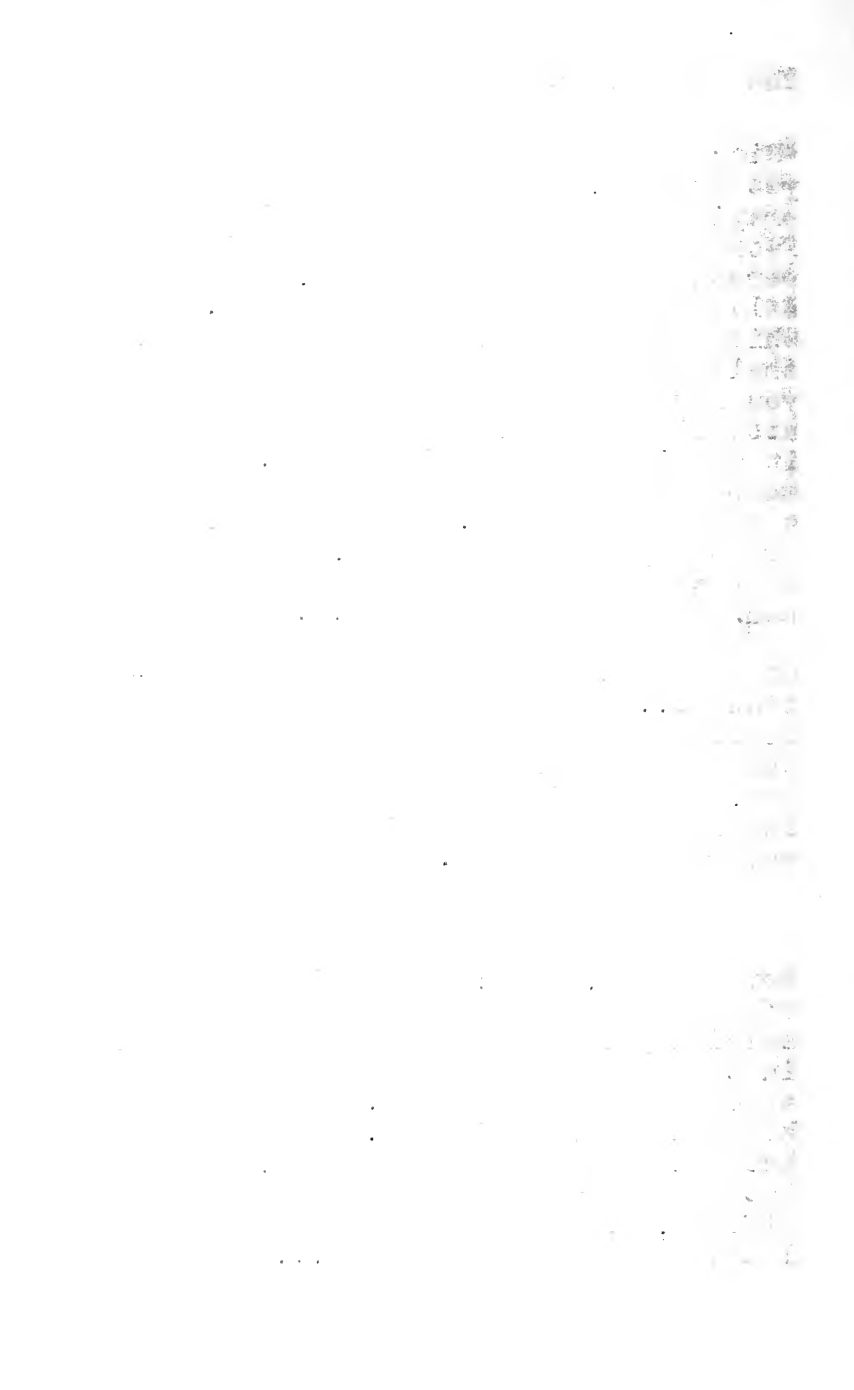
"Since the moment of Providence has not yet arrived, I shall limit myself to praying and earnestly beseeching the Father of light to deign to enlighten persons whom I love so much, and whose salvation is so dear to my heart. Meanwhile my dear sister and dear mother, I shall always have for you the love which you have deserved by your kindness and attentions to me, and shall always make it a point to prove it to you. But remember that you are loading me down with a very heavy cross. Fortunately, I have great hopes of the future, and believe that sooner or later God will touch your hearts and open your eyes..."

Once the controversy had been discontinued...more than ever did he besiege heaven with ardent supplications for the accomplishment of his heart's desire, and we find innumerable passages in his journal testifying to his perseverance in prayer.

* * *

November 30, 1834: "Today is the last of the fifteen Fridays which I have specially devoted to the Sacred Heart, in order to obtain a favor which I have asked for so many years. I must still keep on and not give up. I shall never know all that I have obtained, but I know that prayer is never without its effects, and with respectful confidence I adore the designs of God..."

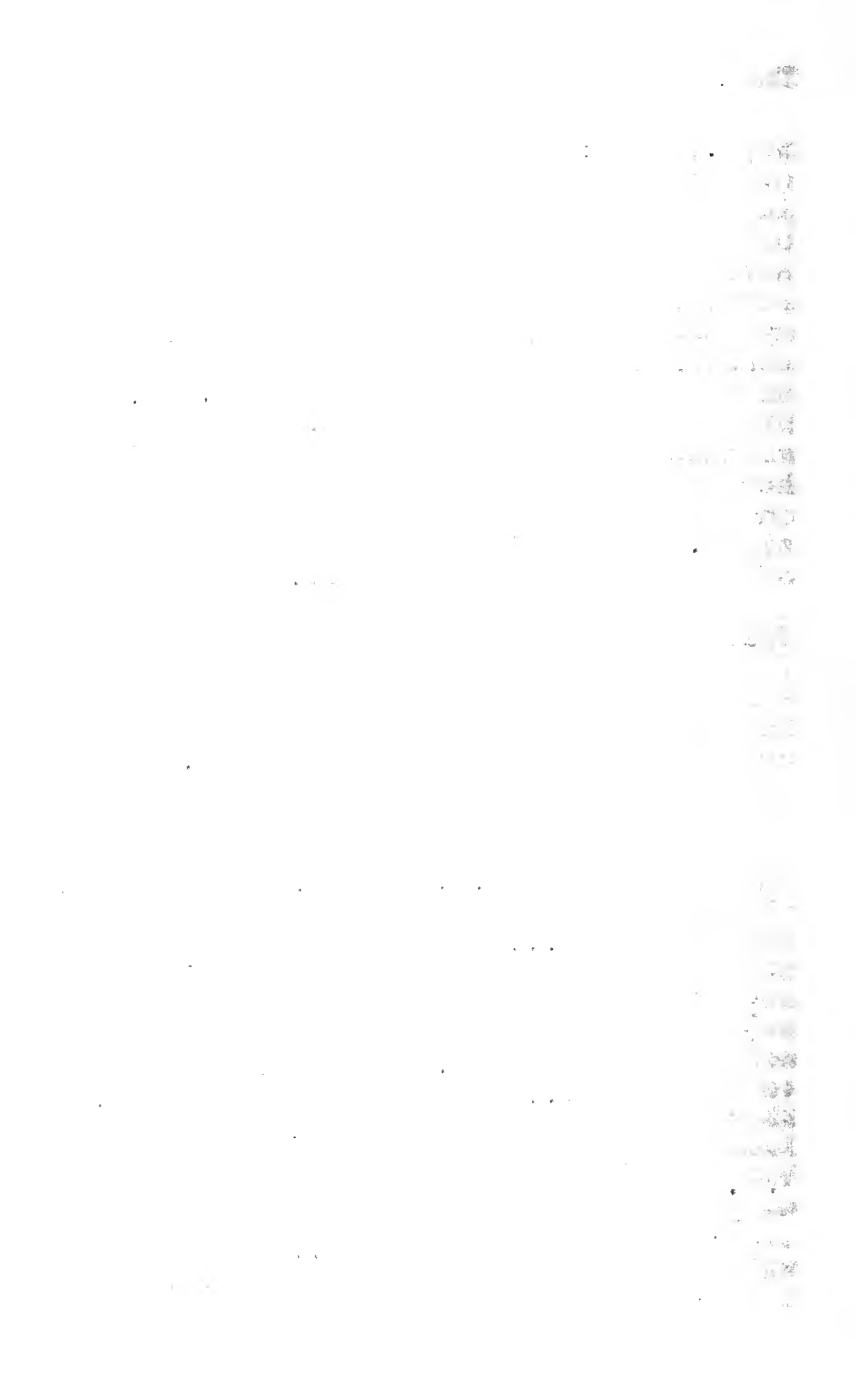
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Sept., 1854: "I have performed a rather difficult act of obedience in consenting to give the principal conferences of the retreat of my confreres; but I have been distracted from making my own retreat by the daily visits I have paid my good mother, whom I nearly lost, through a very severe attack to which she might have succumbed on Sept. 11, when they came to fetch me. God in His goodness has been kind enough to relieve her at what seemed to be the last moment and I have been afraid of a relapse ever since. It is difficult to form an idea of what I suffer at times..."

This is the last note which we have found in which he speaks of his mother, and we have not been able to discover how he supported the heavy and cruel cross of seeing her die in heresy.

Community life was another source of almost daily trouble and moral grief to our dear confrere...We know, for example, that if there is in a community one person who is...more humble and mortified than the others and ready to submit to anything without reply, he will be expected to perform duties that all the others have shirked. In fact, if there is something...disagreeable to be done, or if the imperfect refuse to perform some duty, it will always fall to his lot. Thus men of good will are overburdened while those who refuse to do anything but what they like...criticize in comfort those who do the work...



God also permits that there should be in the holiest communities influential persons, who with the best intentions in the world, allow themselves to be guided by prejudice, so that they do not render all possible justice to those who deserve it. They are deceived, forget...inflict suffering on some of their inferiors. This is a trial which makes it necessary that those on whom Providence has inflicted it, should be possessed of more than ordinary virtue... <Father Tracol> was not an entire stranger to this species of trial, but he never uttered a complaint...

* * *

...It was his custom to throw himself at the feet of our Savior in the Most Holy Sacrament, to offer up his sufferings in expiation of his sins...

* * *

There are some things which really cannot be explained but by the secret guidance of Providence for the welfare and perfection of the elect. Hence, it happens, that...even in the most fervent communities, one person is a heavy cross to another, without in the least knowing the pain which he inflicts...All religious can expect to undergo this trial, but all do not know how to derive as much profit from it as <Father Tracol> ...This may be seen from the manner in which he accepted his retirement from the House of Providence in 1841...

June 27, 1841: "...Circumstances have brought about my retirement from the House of Providence, where I have said Mass every day since the sickness of the venerable Father Duret. I had asked to be replaced, but the good superior liked to see me useful to this house, and advised me to continue.

"Father Tourvieille, who is now the head of the Community, has seen fit to appoint a Spanish religious, who is living with us, to take my place...I have been informed of a criticism uttered by our worthy superior which has made me feel the fitness of this resolution..."

* * *

<Father Tracol> has expressed the following idea very briefly in his journal, but he says a great deal in a few words. "I seem to have a vocation for suffering rather than for action; for God wishes that I should ordinarily let things be done either by Himself or others. The great point for me is to pray, suffer and practice profound humility."

...One thing is certain, and that is that God tried him in every manner, and to all the crosses which we have already mentioned we must add another, very painful and heavy, namely, exterior suffering and scruples.

In 1832, Father Tracol depicted the following portrait of the scrupulous person...

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"They assimilate with extraordinary avidity all that they read in spiritual books, they are anxious to put all of it into practice without omitting a single item, what is worse, try to do it all at once. Thus they create a plan of ideal perfection which it is impossible to put into practice, and insist on following it. They aspire to certainty and not to be deceived in anything, and believe they have succeeded if they do nothing like anyone else. Before they begin to act, they wear themselves out on the purity and excellence of their intentions, and after every action they never cease turning over and examining the least details. All this is done with an anxiety and vehemence, which violently excites the mind and ends by injuring the health."

Father Tracol did not fail to discover some of these peculiarities in himself, and this was a trial which gave him much trouble, especially between the years 1835 and 1855. There was always a certain want of decision in his character...

* * *

January 21, 1834: "...He who desires to do everything with mathematical precision, to embarrass himself, to constrain himself rather than abandon himself gently to the movements of the Holy Spirit, is certainly the victim of an illusion..."

We must not overload ourselves with practices, for a multiplicity entangles, discourages and withers. Everyone has his attraction and he ought to follow it; direction and obedience must be guides. Anything which leads the soul into trouble,..uneasiness and agitation does not come from the Holy "host..."

* * *

At the end of this same year <1834> he wrote..."I am too fond of splitting hairs on the question of purity and excellence of intention. This is a temptation against which I must guard myself.....

* * *

December, 1841: "Only one thing should occupy my attention, and that is, to perform all my actions, one after another, with great simplicity and without any anxiety, with the object of pleasing God...There must be no anxious turning over of my past life, and I must leave the future in the hands of God... I must not seek to be too methodical in my exercises of piety, I must not trouble my head while performing them, nor must I worry over the good thoughts which sometimes escape me...I must drop all this trouble of my fancy by a simple act of self-abandonment and without stopping to think over it, I must... apply the rule which I have been given for scrupulosity."

* * *

February 7, 1856: "I must keep my fancy in check and not reason with it, and I must live more than ever in confidence and self-abandonment."

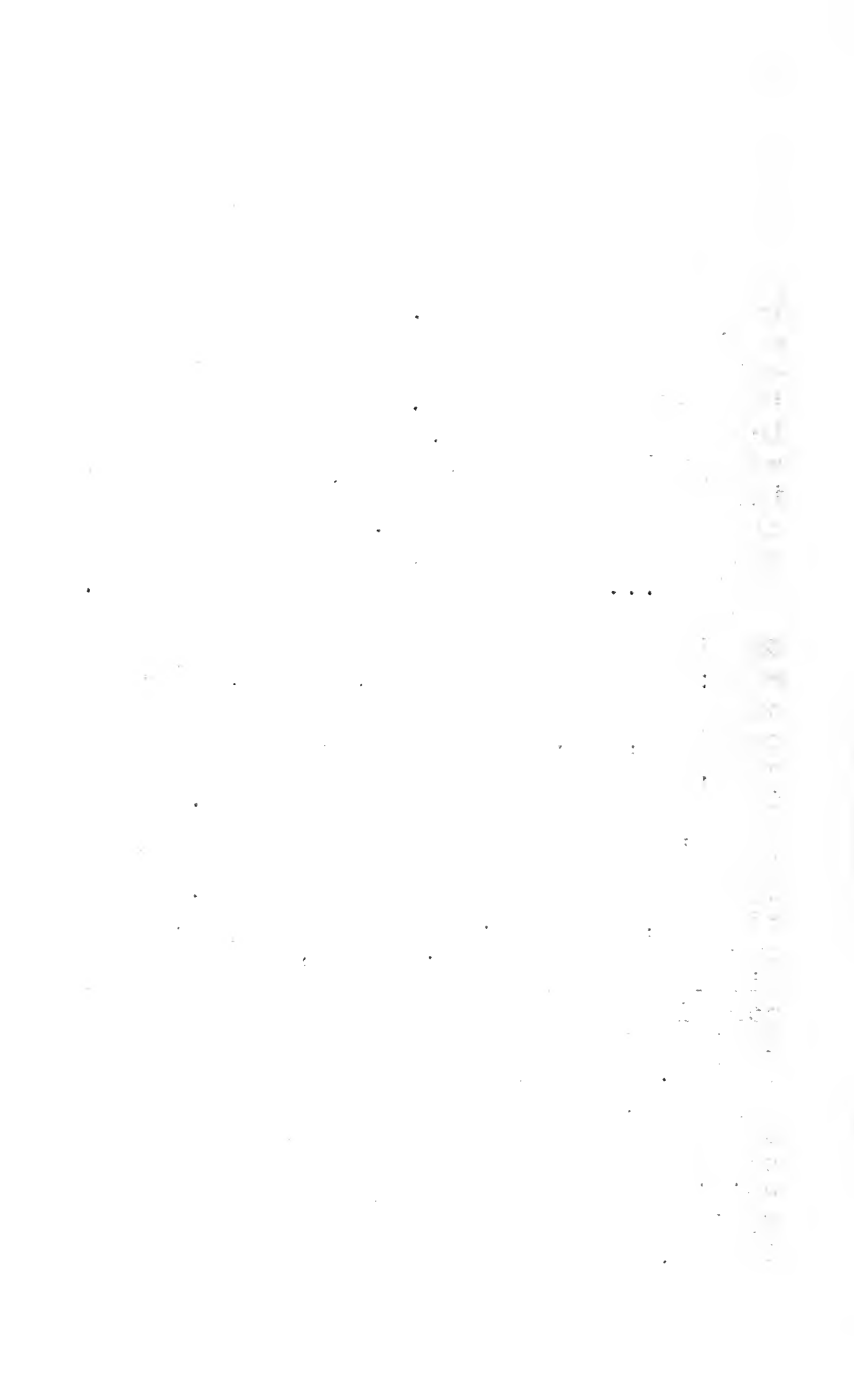
From this time forward we find nothing in the notes of <Father Tracol> but the idea of confidence and self-abandonment in God. It recurs so often, that it forms, as it were, the topic of his diary, just as it was the essential element of his spiritual life...

* * *

CHARITY

The love of God is connected with the love of our neighbor. It is apparently a fixed law that the love of God cannot exist without immediately producing the love of our neighbor. According as the love of God is born, increases and develops in the soul, so is charity born, increasing and strengthening itself in almost the same degree. This is a matter of experience, which may be noticed...in the life of Father Tracol.

Charity may be exercised in various ways: according to time, place, circumstance and character; and it is impossible, or, at any rate, very difficult, for a single person to exercise it under all its different forms. Hence, we must not expect to find that <Father Tracol> was what is called in our day a man of work and action. He did not, like St. Vincent de Paul, or our great patron St. Basil, build hospitals or houses of refuge and retreat, nor did he compile a complete system of legislation for a monastic or religious family. Still, though he did not create anything, he at least contributed all that his strength and talents allowed towards a work of mercy which was both spiritual and temporal, by his long and fruitful ministry in the House of Providence, by the financial assistance



which he secured for this foundation at various periods, and by the alms which he contributed out of his own personal property.

Most of his alms were sent, under one form or another, to the poor children at the House of Providence, and the rest was distributed among such poor as he knew to be ashamed to beg, or in collections which were made in behalf of the indigent during the winter.

In reading over his book of accounts, we find that his gifts were exceedingly generous, and that all his admirable spirit of order and severe economy, left at his disposal at the end of each year was poured into the hands of the needy. In this way he satisfied his love of charity and his desire for poverty.

But it was in spiritual works of mercy that his charity found itself specially at home...We should like to say a few words about the love he bore his community and his confreres, for these were his dearest neighbors, and he loved them and his family most...

* * *

He was a member of a new-born community, and, though he had spent a short time in the Jesuit novitiate, he was now certain that he was where God wished him to be...All the interests of his

community were truly his own, and all that concerned it, concerned him to the...depths of his heart.

* * *

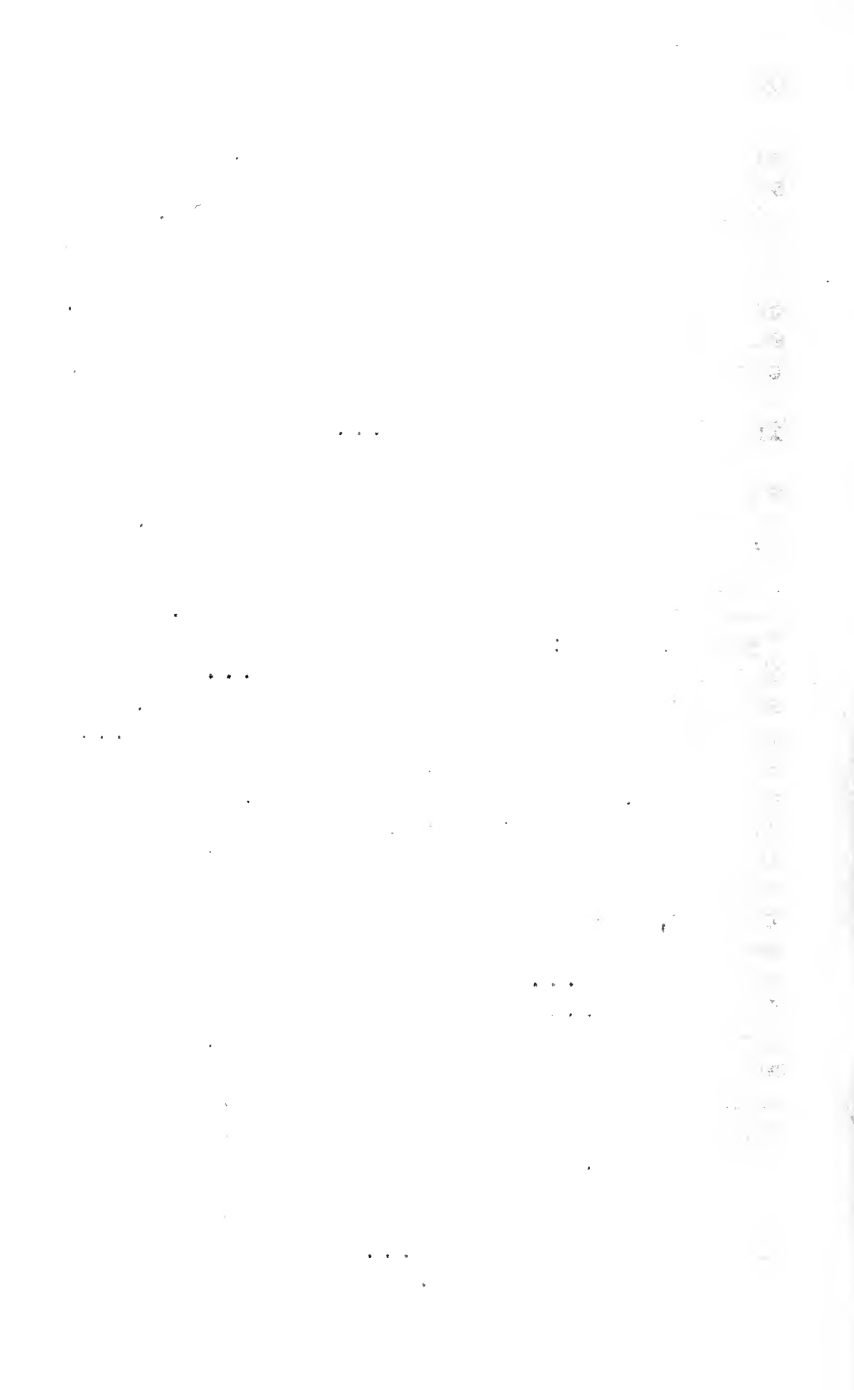
"March 1827:— There are still great obstacles in the way of the institution which the superiors of the community propose to erect at Feyzin. In order that the work of God may be solid, it must be founded on difficulties...

"I feel that there is a great work before us...I should like, if the superior will be good enough to permit it, to propose a novena in order to ask God for the graces necessary for the opening of the new house. It seems to me that, we might for this purpose begin on the seventh of April and end on the fifteenth, the day on which Easter Sunday falls this year. We could recite the psalm Nisi Dominus, the Memorare, and the invocations to the Blessed Virign, St. Joseph, St. Basil, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Francis Regis, St. Aloysius Gonzaga and St. Stanislaus Kostka. We could also recite a decade of the rosary in common, and offer up our Holy Communions for the intention of the novena."

This pious request was granted, and he informs us of the fact in an entry in his journal on April 7. "Today, the Saturday before Palm Sunday, we commence the novena of which I spoke, and it is

also taken up by the Ursulines, the Sisters of the Sacred Heart and the Sisters of the House of Providence. Our little community has great need of help from on high if it wishes to overcome the opposition with which it meets. We must pray fervently and work harder than ever to acquire our sanctification, so as to be less unworthy of co-operating in the work of God..."

While <Father Tracol> wished for a little prosperity for his community, he wished more ardently still for its spiritual good and the advance of its members in the path of perfection. "May 8, 1827: One of the particular favors I have asked for today...is a master of novices for our community, a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost... a man of experience, gentle and humble of heart, patient under trial, skilful in distinguishing men, reading the human heart and directing souls; we want a man of unchangeable evenness of temper, of gentle and amiable gravity and capable of inspiring both confidence and respect...Such a treasure is exceedingly rare...Great as are the other graces we have already received, they would in some respects be useless were this one not to crown them all. It is not grand and beautiful houses, a large membership, popularity and other favors of the kind which do good to a community and propagate the glory of God; it is the religious spirit...which is acquired in a good novitiate. This is the more



necessary because one can acquire an entirely wrong idea of the religious life...

"This is why a master of novices who is a man after God's own heart is, for so many reasons, more necessary than a superior to a community..."

His hopes were not fulfilled...until later. "November 21, 1834. This day is a great feast for us, a day of gratitude; for it is the anniversary of the organization of our little community, and the election of our venerable superior. It has brought with it a new favor, one which we have looked for so long. In conformity with what was arranged by the Chapter which met at our last retreat, with regard to the foundation of a novitiate, Providence has permitted that it should be under the protection of Mary; that the four young men who were selected to make their novitiate in the regular manner, should be confided to our dear confrere Father Deglesne this evening. They will follow the temporary rule for novices under his direction. Their admission will take place on the first Sunday of Advent with the usual prayers, which have not been made use of for so long..."

While Father Tracol was so happy over the graces which our Savior had, in His goodness, deigned to grant the young

community, he also...felt very keenly the blows which she suffered and the dangers which threatened her...An entry made in his journal in June, 1828, gives us an insight into the anxiety and alarm caused by the decree of the King, Charles X, concerning unauthorised congregations..."How will the first of these fatal measures affect us? Alas, our venerable superiors will perhaps be obliged to pronounce our dissolution in order to permit the passage of this tempest, which I hope will not last long...Let us await developments and the answer to the letter which has been sent to the bishop.

"Here is a little community which has been gathered together with so much labor, attacked from the very moment of its birth by so many storms which have torn it in every direction. It was founded, like all the works of God, upon difficulties; it carried on its work quietly and saw all its modest institutions beginning to flourish; now it is obliged to renounce its vocation, or burst the interior bonds which religion has approved of and which united our hearts in a manner as strong as it was holy and innocent. But as our superiors think that in order to continue our work it would be prudent to make a great sacrifice, then may it enter into the designs of God. We must add this cross to the others.

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"...Will this action suffice, and will they leave us in peace to follow out our holy rule in a house, the growth of which seemed to promise so much prosperity and success?...As far as I am concerned, I have no desire to know what our superiors intend to do, or what will be the result of their deliberations and negotiations. I am content to submit to their orders and to pray for the success of their undertakings. I shall do my best to sustain my community by the regularity of my conduct, and if it please God to afflict me with its dissolution, I shall always seek to share the fate of my dear confreres... If...we are to be persecuted, separated and exiled, I shall find consolation in adoring the designs of Providence..."

We find yet another proof of his love for his religious family in the pious care and praiseworthy eagerness with which he gathered and wrote down information on the origin and first days of the College of Annonay and the community, and composed somewhat lengthy and very edifying biographical notices on Father Actorie, Father Payan and Father Polly. He has placed it in our power to write the complete history of the community, for he preserved the remembrance of the opening of our work, and all the memoranda of the society, and gathered and put in order a large number of letters, circulars and other interesting matter during the whole administration...of Father Tourvieille.

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...We should be deserving of reproach were we not to give here a page from his journal which refers to his saintly friend Father Deglesne...

"April 14, 1856: Father Deglesne has been living at St. Barbe since the tenth of this month with the three postulants who are the first to make their novitiate in a separate house. They have been given a part of St. Barbe all to themselves. The absence of Father Deglesne has left a great void in our midst, although we shall see him often...I shall endeavor to remember the good advice which I have received from one...so enlightened in the ways of God."

On June 19th of the same year, he wrote again: "The separation from my beloved confrere, Father Deglesne, ought to have prepared me in the designs of God for a loss which has plunged us into the deepest grief and mourning. This accomplished model of christian and religious perfection has left us after long and cruel suffering...His patience never gave way...His resignation was admirable. When he saw that the end was approaching, he recommended himself to all and asked our Redeemer for nothing but patience and the forgiveness of his sins...I have lost in him a lifelong friend, a wise and prudent counsellor, a refuge in all difficulties and sorrows. He held the secret of always saying the right thing at the right time..."

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We regret very much that in 1859
<Father Tracol> interrupted his diary...

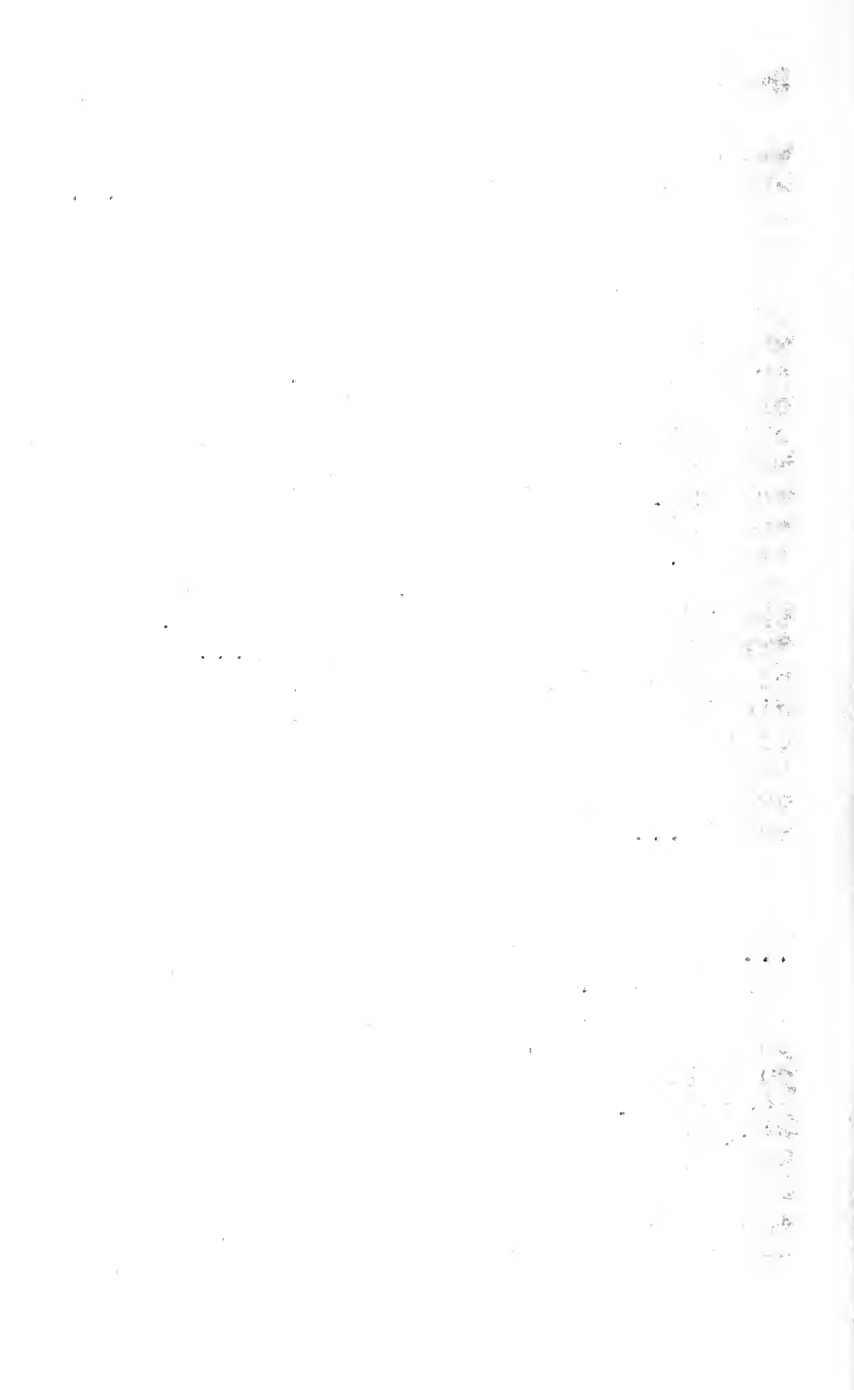
* * *

Our dear confere found many obstacles and much opposition in himself to the practice of perfect charity. The first of these was the excitability of his character, which often gave rise, if we may believe his own words, to incautious actions, exterior signs of impatience, and quick and impetuous outbursts of temper. A second obstacle was his extreme sensitiveness. He tells us of the effects of them in his journal.

"The least annoyance upsets me...an act of self-denial makes me ill; contradiction gives me a headache, the thought of the smallest sacrifice spoils my temper and I have to think the matter over a thousand times before I can submit...."

* * *

...He was also inclined to raillery and sarcasm. He was gifted with a very sharp intelligence, and was quicker than most people in seeing the ridiculous side and the eccentricities of other men. In fact, he could have pictured them in the most malicious and comical manner if he had not fought so long and continuously against a tendency so contrary to charity. If we consider also his habitual ill-health,



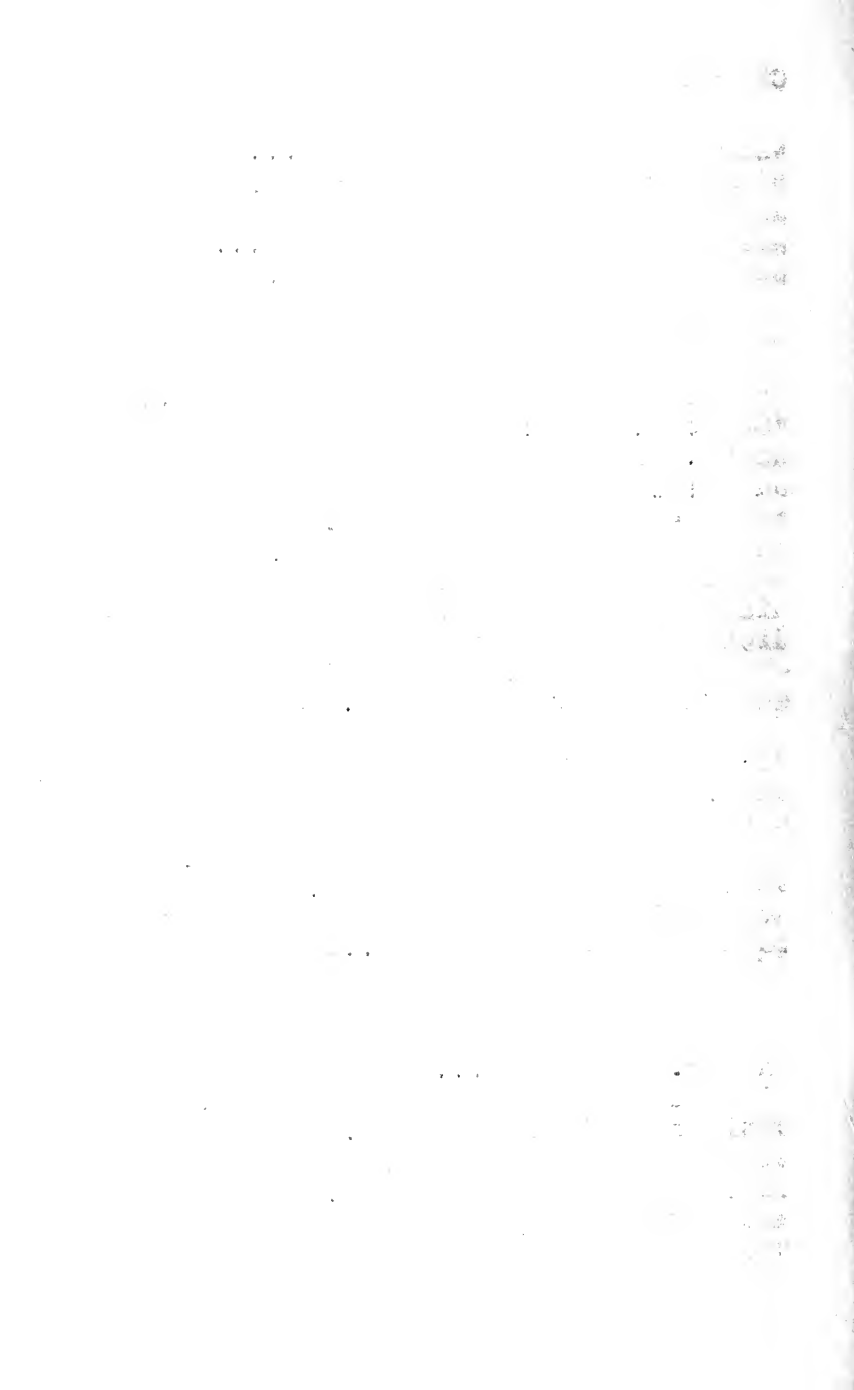
which must necessarily have...inclined him to sadness and melancholy, we can understand how serious and continual were the efforts he put forth...to become all things to all men.

He gives us a masterly description of the sufferings and merits which are engendered by patience and charity... "October, 1830:— First Friday of the month. What do we mean by reforming our hearts after the model of the adorable Heart of Jesus? Is it not to bear with oneself and others, and preserve an unchangeable serenity in the midst of interior and exterior contradictions? Here is a two-fold exercise which returns every day, in every place and in all sorts of ways.

"I do not know which is the more difficult, though I have an idea that it is harder and more meritorious to bear with oneself. We should endeavor, and that with all our strength, to bear everything from other men and do nothing to cause them suffering..."

* * *

On Jan. 26 <1840>...he wrote as follows: "I must remember the words of St. Paul... Omnibus omnia factus sum. I must bear everything from others, and never inflict suffering on anyone. I must take unto myself as much as possible the thousand annoyances which result from



bearing with the whims of others. If I sometimes find that the burden of others is somewhat heavy, I must remember that they have to put up with me, and that is no doubt not a light burden..."

* * *

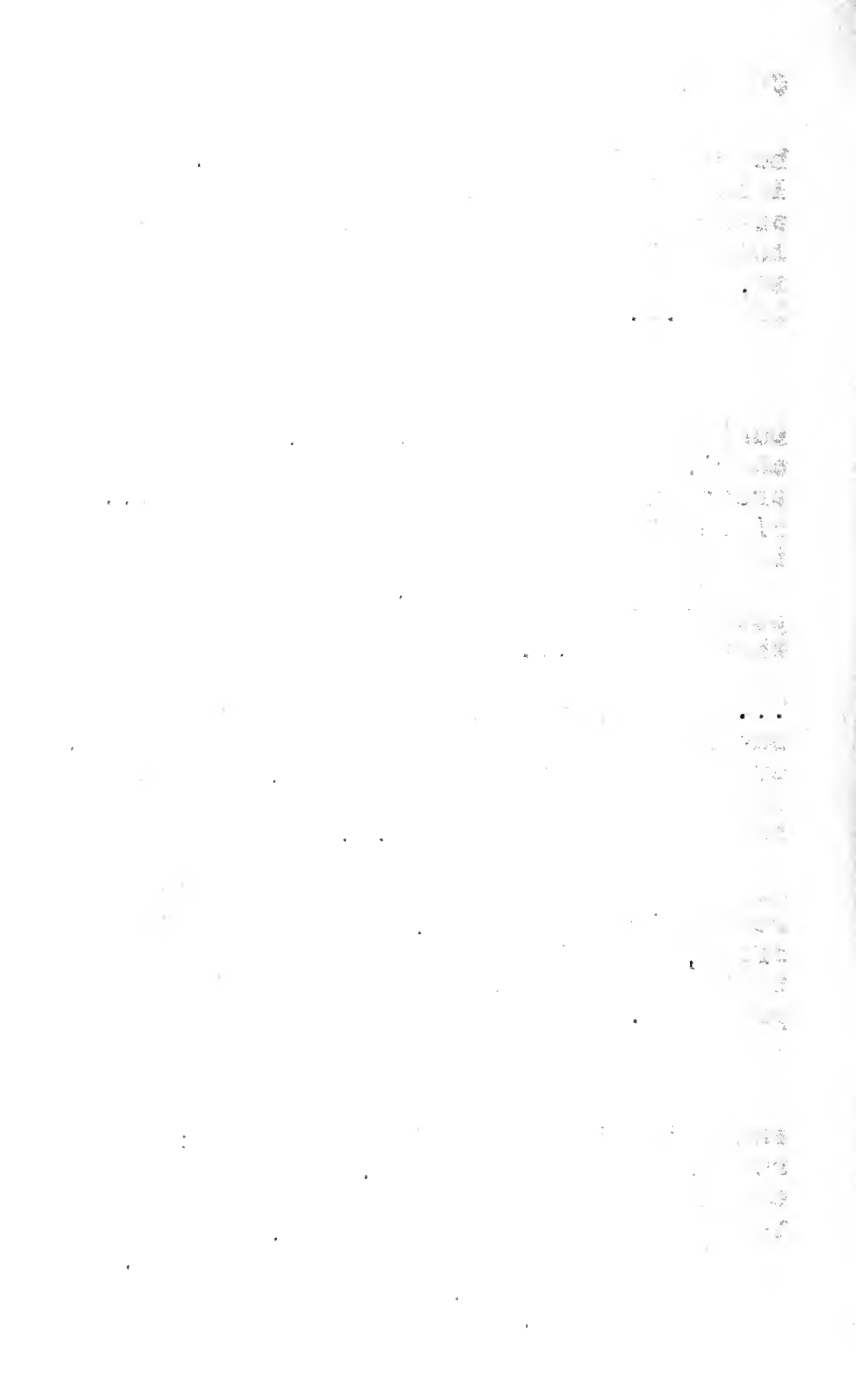
During this same year, 1840, he made charity the subject of his annual retreat and these are his resolutions... "I ought to combat this inclination to indulge my curiosity with regard to the conduct of others, to see their peculiarities and desire to tell others what they do..."

"...I must not hesitate to put myself out in order to serve and oblige others. Even when they are unwelcome, I must show that cordiality which is one of the effects of charity..."

He was not content with taking this resolution only once, but renewed it often, especially when he foresaw that he would soon have to put it into practice.

* * *

The following was written in 1829: "With regard to the superiors, I must not seek to know what concerns the government of the community or its affairs, nor must I criticize any steps that are taken. I must be respectful, docile, confident and foreseeing."



We think that he was faithful to this section of the rule, for several years passed by before he made a fresh allusion to his relations with his superiors, and it was not until Nov. 1, 1838, that he wrote the following lines: "A new superior has taken the place of the venerable father whom death has taken from our midst. I hope that I shall not give him any trouble, and that I shall receive his orders and advice with docility. I have begun well, by the grace of God, but I must persevere."

...In 1842 Father Tourvieille became so inform that he was not able to do all his own work, and carry on the administration of the community, the college, and several religious congregations. So he appointed Father Tracol to assist him as confidential secretary, and from this time, the connection between the two became closer, though their characters and temperaments were so different...This...work...furnished Father Tracol with numberless opportunities for practicing obedience, humility, gentleness, patience and charity. He lived in a little room next to that of Father Tourvieille, and he was often called in during the day to do some pressing work. He had at such moments to leave everything immediately in order to set to work, and was often obliged to interrupt his own occupations...

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These...interruptions of work which he had already begun were well calculated to provoke a little feeling of ill humor and discontent. But Father Tracol was determined to succeed in entirely overcoming this interior revolt...

"Aug. 2, 1846: ...I find it very difficult to accept certain reprimands, especially when they are given in a particular manner and under certain circumstances. I try to justify myself, I become a little excited, I say more than I should and I think a great deal more than I say. It is absolutely necessary for me to correct myself...

"November, 1847: I must keep a careful watch over my tongue. I must not dispute with, contradict or excuse myself to others, especially my superiors."

* * *

These passages bear witness to his efforts to overcome himself entirely and acquire the perfection he desired so much. We also find in...letters written by Father Tourvieille a positive proof of the esteem and admiration which the superiuro felt for his patience and resignation...

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"Aug. 31, 1853: I greet you, my dear confrere and secretary. I am going to make my confession to you, so as not to have to go any farther to tell my troubles. This is the way that heaven is filled: some go there through suffering with resignation, some go in making them suffer, not, however, willingly, but through thoughtlessness for which they should be scolded and corrected.

"The vacation will soon pass away my friend, so get in a good supply of health. I am sure that I shall find my papers and letters in good order and that you will be up to date with all your correspondence.

"I have my own little troubles, duties, remedies and correspondence, and the days pass quickly enough. I have been imprisoned in my room so far, and... Mr. Raynaud has been in nearly every day. They tell me, however, that I am better, though I feel very weak. Let us leave everything in the hands of our heavenly Father, and all will be for the better.

"Will you be so kind as to send me, or tell someone else to do so, some news as to the health of your mother. You told me a few days before I left, that she was not so well as she might be.

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Will you present my respects to her. I recommend myself to your prayers and embrace you with affection. Remember me cordially to Father Pages senior, and to Father Alphonse and the other confreres."

It seems as if Father Tracol had not much difficulty in practicing charity towards his confreres. It is true that he led rather a retired life, and so did not come into continuous contact with the same persons...

In his notes on the rule in 1822 * * * he wrote..."During our recreations we must be kind to all our confreres and we must be attentive to and anticipate their wants. This is expressly commanded by the rule..."

* * *

He had been following this rule of conduct long before he expressed it in... words, and he was frequently accused of shutting himself up too much, of isolating himself to a certain extent and of separating himself from his confreres. We know that he did this chiefly on account of his love for prayer; but we do not like to take it upon ourselves to say that the fear of wounding charity in conversation had nothing to do with the determination.

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Though he did not spend all his recreations with his conferes, it cannot be said that he lived absolutely separated from them, for he never allowed a day to pass without spending some portion of the noon or evening recreation with some of the members of the community and he joined very pleasantly in the conversation, especially if it turned on some religious subject. If, however, it was on the affairs of the world he contented himself with listening, and soon returned to his work...

He was very polite and affable towards all his confreres, and full of attentions and kindnesses for them. He did all he could to find new ways of giving them pleasure, and if in moments of suffering or excitement he happened so to forget himself as to answer a little sharply, he hastened to find them, and beg their pardon...

Thus did <Father Tracol> unite with his love for God the truest, most sincere and ardent charity for men, a charity such as St. Paul has commanded, that is, patient and gentle, desirous only of obtaining spiritual good for oneself and one's neighbors, and profoundly humble.

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HUMILITY

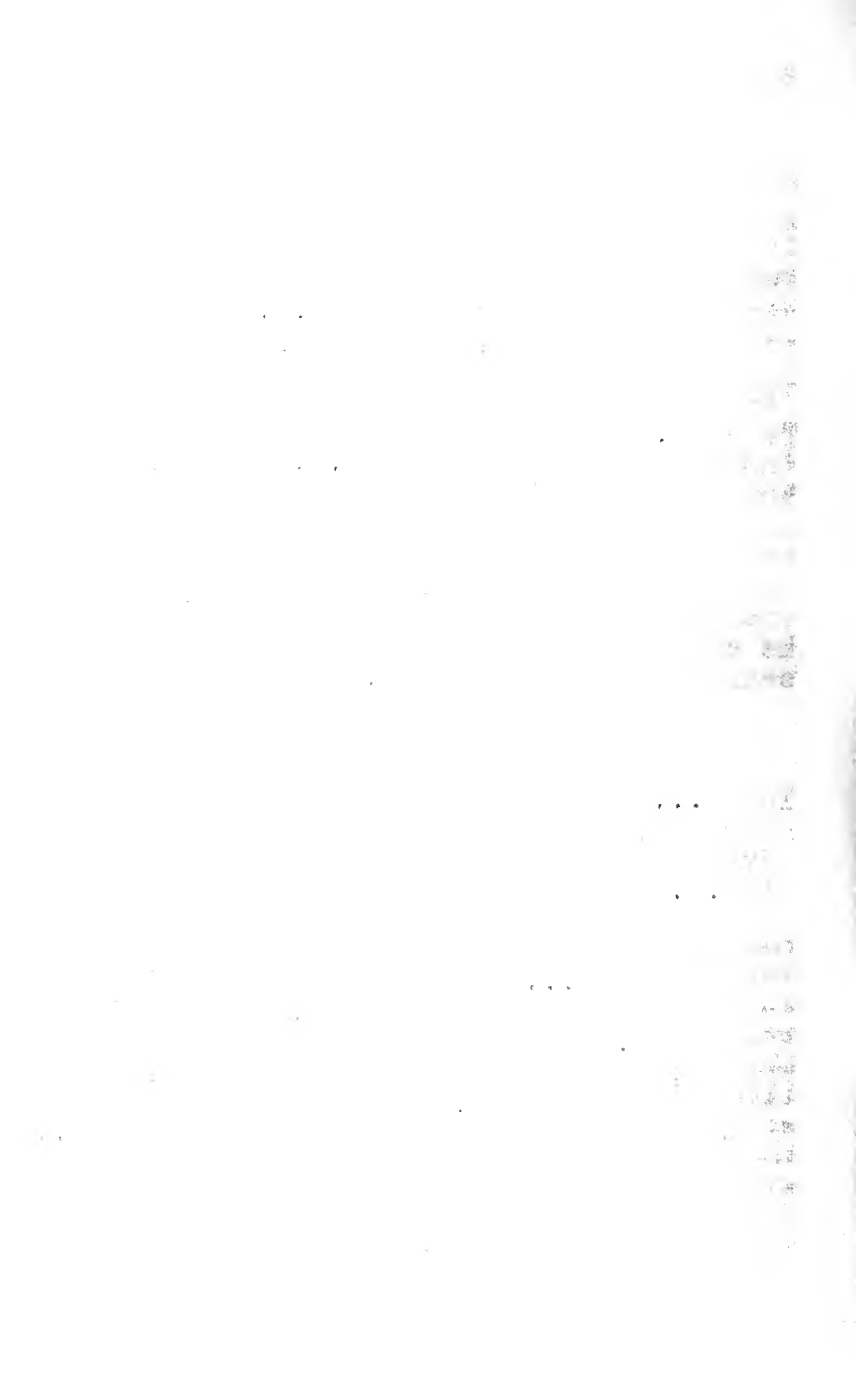
The saints considered humility the ordinary companion of charity...We shall not be astonished, therefore, to find numerous proofs and examples of a sincere and profound humility in <Father Tracol>. From his youth he knew the importance of this virtue...and during the whole of his long existence, he worked hard to perfect himself in the exercise of a humble and hidden life unknown to the world, unknown to a great extent even to his confreres, from whom he concealed with pious ingenuity the secret of his virtues...

In a ... meditation which he wrote in February, 1832, he explains some of the advantages of the hidden and solitary life...

* * *

One Low Sunday he wrote once more on the same subject... "When Jesus has decided to reveal Himself to a soul, to give it His peace, to make it touch His sacred wounds, to fill it with consolation, strength and light, He generally commands it to shut itself up in a solitary place... He expects to find the doors closed, and the world absolutely excluded..."

* * *



<Father Tracol> was firmly convinced of the truth and usefulness of the general principles which he studied... in his meditations on the hidden and humble life. He did not fail to apply them and they gave rise to some general resolutions on this subject...

"August, 1827: Our Savior has called me to a hidden and laborious life, and I should be quite content with it because it is the best..."

The following note, written some years later, seems to tell us of singular and rapid progress in the virtue of humility. "My sole pleasure ought to be to diminish, to become lower in my own estimation...to hide and keep silence, to submit to contempt, and to share the opprobrium of Jesus crucified and the powerlessness and weakness of the Infant in the manger."

* * *

This love of humility, of a life of retirement unknown to the world... soon turned into an attraction which became ever more...powerful and formed one of the essential elements of his moral life. This is evident from what he wrote in October, 1844: "When I read the lives of the saints, I am filled with the desire of imitating those who led a simple, ordinary and hidden life, who sanctified themselves by ordinary actions, and without attracting atten-

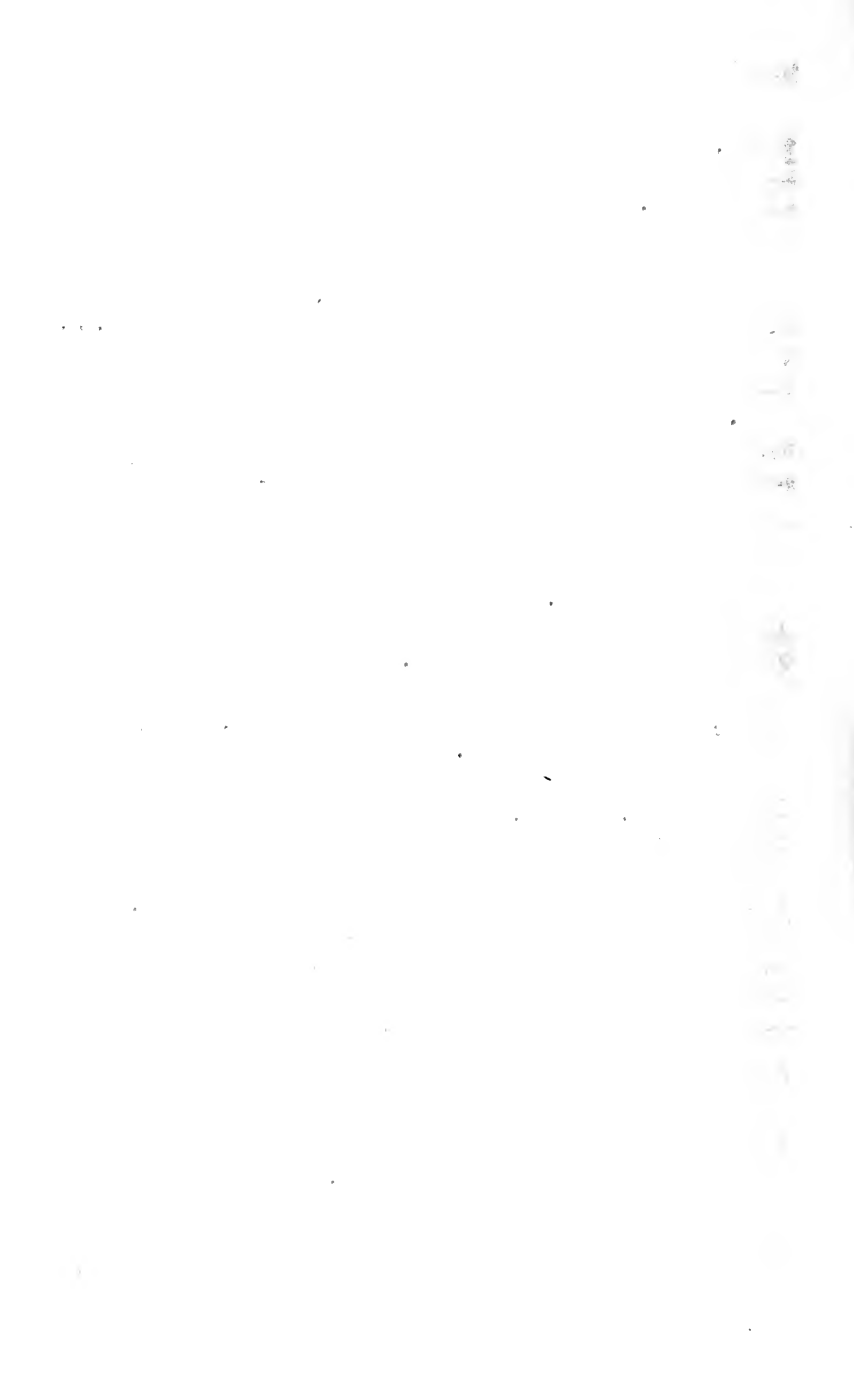
tion, and who performed ordinary actions in a manner that had nothing ordinary about it.

"All the soldiers in an army do not fight in the foremost rank, and there are even some who are never under fire... The important thing is for each one to be faithful to the duty imposed upon him. Each one ought to be in his place and help towards preserving harmony and making that army but one body."

In December of the same year, he wrote the following: "Humility must be my chief support. By humility I can make up for very many things that my health or position bar to me. During my last retreat, I read something on this subject, which struck me very much, and I must not forget it."

In Advent, 1845, he returned to the same subject: "In commencing the ecclesiastical year, and that series of mysteries which Our Savior accomplished for us, I must begin by humility. I must strengthen the foundations. All the evil in me comes from a pride which is more or less disguised.

"Those who cannot perform great corporal mortifications can and must undergo inconveniences in their eagerness to make progress in holy humility. Here is a means within the reach of everyone of gathering fruits of penance such as have been recommended by the great Precursor.



I have plenty of opportunities, and I hope I shall derive more profit from them than I have hitherto done..."

* * *

"I must strive to acquire true and solid humility by meditating on the example of Our Savior and the saints..."

"Here are some points which will enable me to arrange my particular examen according to the advices I have received.

1. During temptation to vainglory and pride, I must think on the subjects for humiliation which I find in my past life, the flights of my fancy, etc.
2. I must put others before myself, not only in my opinion but also in practice. My conduct to confreres must be as humble and respectful as though they were my superiors.
3. I must not examine their conduct, and I must be on my guard against curiosity and criticism in this connection. I must examine my own conduct when I am tempted, and I must not re-preach them when they seem to forget themselves.
4. I must not excuse my own faults, nor blame them in others.
5. I must take contradiction and humiliation in good part, even joy, thus forcing myself to resemble Jesus...

6. I must perform a number of exterior and interior acts of humility in the morning and evening, endeavoring to increase the number by degrees."

* * *

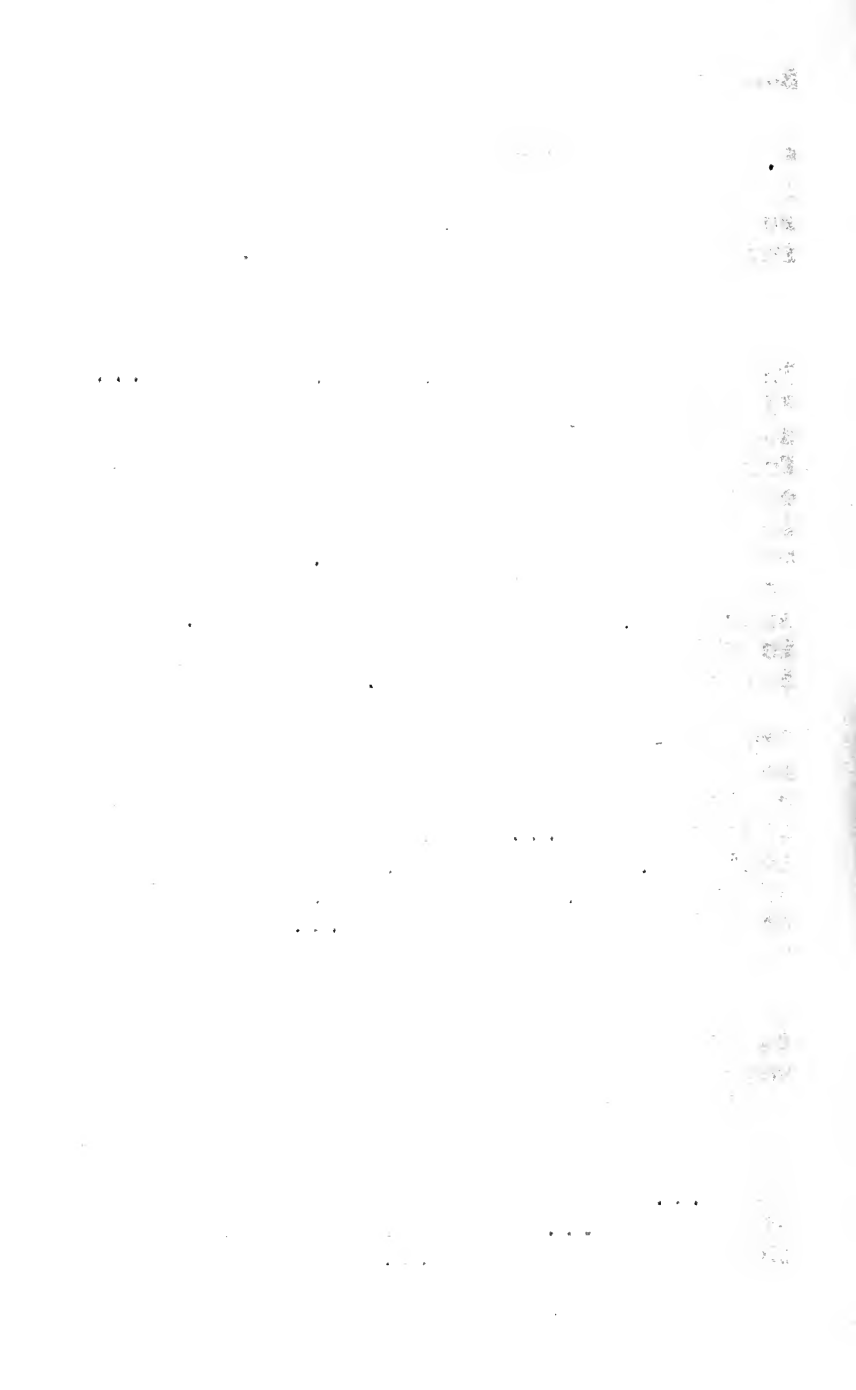
In the month of June, 1840, he wrote... "I have been thinking very seriously to-day on this inclination to singularity for which I have been reprimanded several times and which often makes me desire to be different from the others by leaving the common path. I wish sometimes to omit certain community exercises, sometimes private ones. This is what one of my directors rightly calls spiritual egotism.

"My self-love wishes in its vanity for me to consider this inclination for retirement and isolation as an attraction of grace...Alas, it is frequently laziness, want of zeal, excessive care of my health, secret pride, which hides that it may be sought out..."

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We discover a fresh proof of the love which our dear confrere professed for a life of retreat in his meditations on the vacations which our rule permits, and the manner in which they should be spent...We shall quote a few pages of his journal...We shall, perhaps, find them a little severe...

* * *



"It seems to me that I could turn our long vacation into a time of retreat, so to speak. I could make use of this rest to read and pray more...

* * *

"It is often a duty to visit our relatives during the vacation, but we must be very careful. Non est propheta sine honore nisi in patria sua...In spite of all the beautiful plans we may have formed in our zeal, we rarely work any marvel in our homes, and it seems rather that our tongues are tied and we cannot speak of God or salvation...Abraham must leave his house and family in order to become the father of a great people...

"Gratitude, however, obliges us to respond to the welcome of our parents, and a visit of this nature should be preferred to any other of those which obedience may exact. We may add to this a few visits in the neighborhood, but it must be only to persons whom we know well, and we must be certain that our visit is not unwelcome. There are some who visit us, and press us to come and visit them, but are really glad when we do not accept the invitation.

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"...When I am at the College I shall be punctual to the hours set by the rules; and when elsewhere, I shall decide beforehand at what hour I shall make my

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meditation, particular examen, spiritual reading and visit to the Blessed Sacrament; and when I am to say the office and rosary. In order to be more sure, I shall write it down, and take care to examine my conscience on this subject at night."

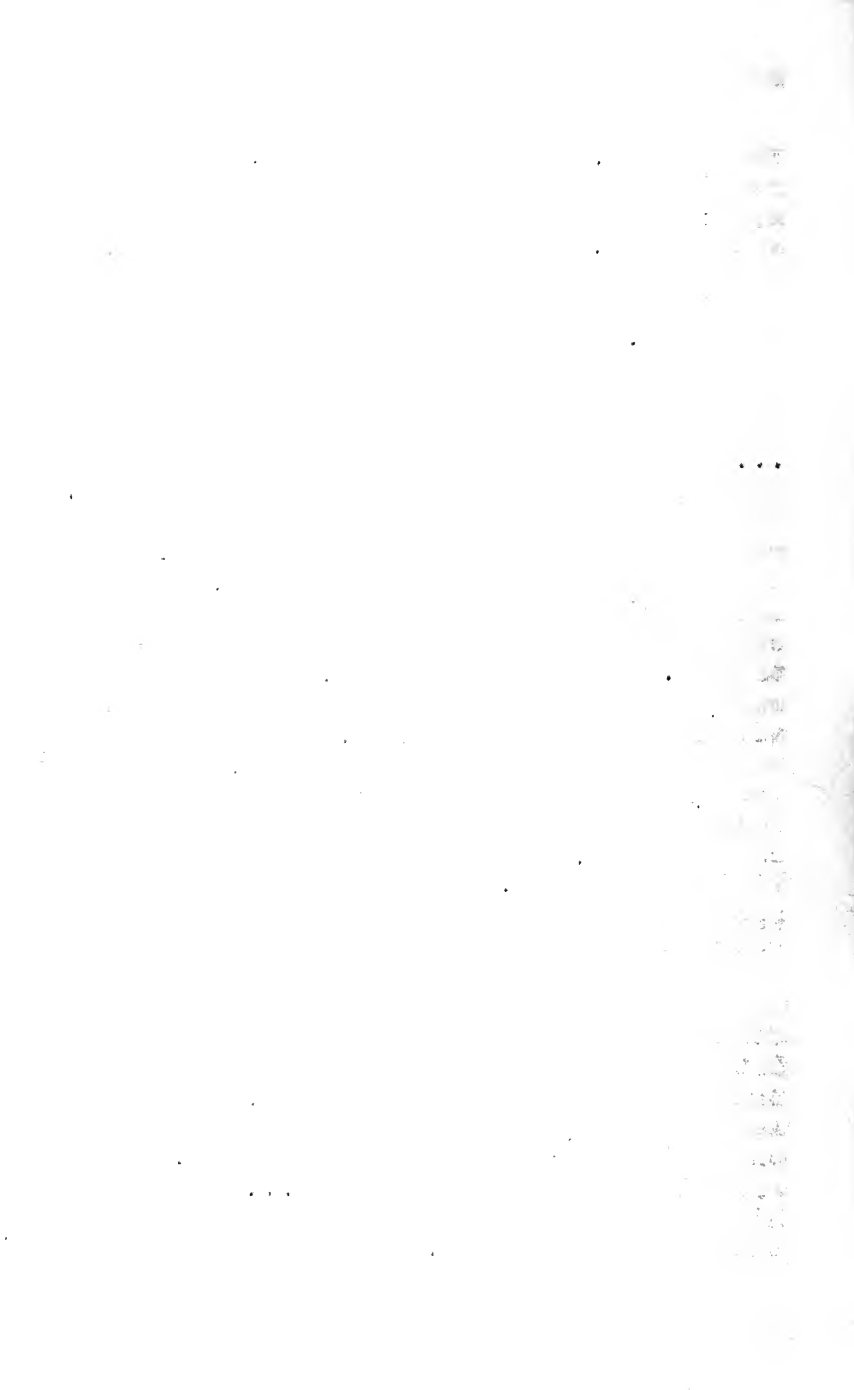
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...We shall now describe how <Father Tracol> usually employed <his holidays>. For about fifteen years he generally remained nine or ten days at Lyons, at the house of Father Charbonnier, a virtuous priest who was for many years chaplain to the Sisters of the Visitation. During this time, he always made a retreat of at least three days, often even of eight days, and devoted the rest of the time to prayer, walks and pious conversations; and he preached some instructions to various religious communities, but particularly to the Visitation nuns. We think that journies spent in such a manner were rather retreats than vacations

* * *

Some years later he carried out his intention of stopping these annual trips to Lyons and after 1845, he never left Annonay except to go once or twice on a pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Francis Regis at La Louvesc...He spent his vacations in retreat and recollection at the college.

* * *



Thus, in order to live a humble and recollected life <Father Tracol> avoided all journeys and visits; in a word, he fled from the world...

* * *

...In a note written in 1833 he tells us..."All are not called to imitate the public life of Our Savior...

* * *

"Happy are those members of a regular community who endeavor to live without attracting attention, or desiring fame; who never move out of the circle of their employments and never interfere with the business of others without necessity; who are not troubled because others do not notice them; who do not try to find out what is going on outside or within the house...Unusquisque proprium donum habet ex Deo..."

...One of the conditions absolutely essential, if we wish to lead a retired and hidden life in the community, is... to love our room, to like to be there... <Father Tracol> observed this...faithfully and the example he sets us in this respect is admirable. It was not because there was anything rich, luxurious or magnificent about his room. Its sole decorations were a crucifix, a few little statues, and some religious pictures. He looked after his room himself, and through a spirit of poverty and humility used to take pleasure in sweeping and scrubbing it.

...One of the principal advantages which he found in this love of solitude was, that he could give himself up to his favorite studies without putting anyone out...

...He was careful to have every minute of the day regulated by a timetable, so that every study or duty had its appointed time...It was by never losing a single moment and by resolutely continuing what he had begun, were it possible to devote but a quarter of an hour a day to it, that he succeeded in acquiring a vast knowledge and in doing an extraordinary amount of work.

He found many other precious advantages in the love of a religious for his cell. In April 1834, he blessed the new room they had given him for his own; and <wrote>...some pious reflections on them <the prayers of the ritual> in his journal...

"I must not consider my room as a profane place, but a place of prayer and retirement where I can obtain all the graces I ask..."

A year later he wrote: "Do you wish to know what your room is? It is a little hermitage in the middle of a town, and you are the recluse. Here you can practice any devotions you wish without fear or risk. You can kiss the floor, strike the breast, prostrate yourself,

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kiss the sacred wounds of our Savior; in a word, all that a hermit can do in his desert.

"It is a little temple, a chapel, and you are its priest. The kneeling desk is its altar; the crucifix, the picture of the Mother of God, and the holy water give rise to many holy affections in the soul. Your heart is the light which burns before Our Savior, your prayers the incense and perfume...

"Do you wish to know what else there is in your cell? St. Bernard calls it a little heaven. What takes place in heaven that does not happen in your cell? There it is that God is honored, loved and served...Remember that there are always five persons present: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, your good guardian angel, and yourself. But remember also the beautiful words of St. Gregory the Great: 'What use is there in exterior solitude if that of the heart is not well preserved?'"

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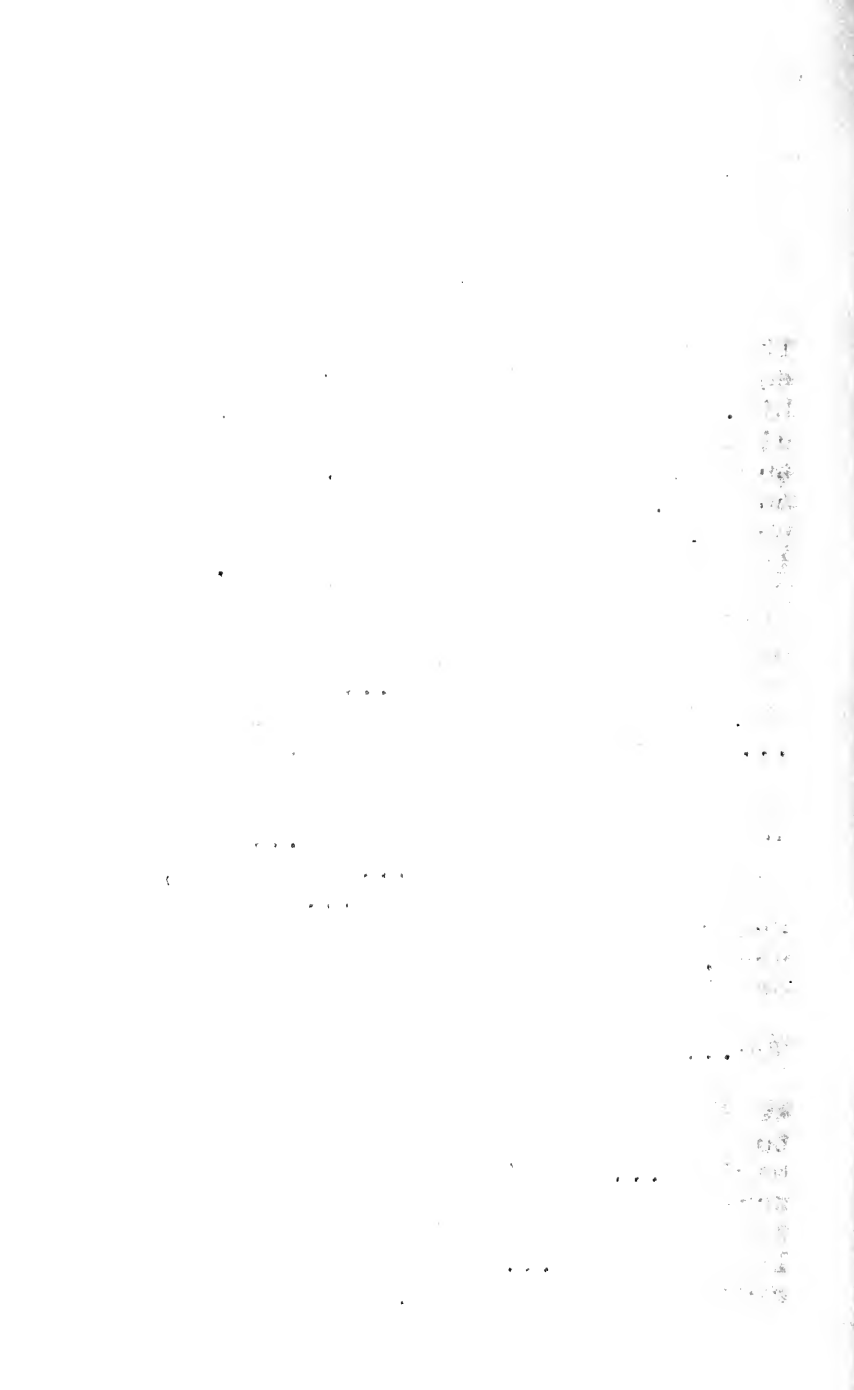
HIS OBEDIENCE

* * *

The truly obedient man finds time to do everything his superiors demand of him. He is everybody's servant, he divides and multiplies himself so as to turn his face to everyone. He puts no one off, he grants all that is in his power, and he gives no one an opportunity for complaining against him. He forgets himself entirely in order to oblige others, and this always with the best possible grace, and a pure and supernatural intention...He does not obey in order to be flattered, noticed ...but simply to please God.

We cannot say whether <Father Tracol> attained to such perfection...for God alone knows this; but...we do know, from reading his journal...that he made fresh progress in this virtue every year. In fact, the last thirty years of his life were devoted to the entire abandonment of self into the hands of God...

We shall divide this constant progress towards perfect obedience into three periods...The first consists of the seven or eight years which extend from the time he began his journal (June 1826) to 1834...Many long meditations represent him at work, trying to con-



vince himself of the necessity...of the virtues he wished to acquite, studying the ways and means of achieving this end. The second period consists of twenty years, a series of daily struggles and constant combats. In his diary... we find on this subject a review of each month...and resolutions which were frequently renewed.

Of the last period of his life, we have an exact knowledge of only five or six years; but the notes which he wrote during these years are most instructive, in spite of their being so brief. There is hardly one for every month, and they generally take up but a few lines...they are nothing more than encouragements to perseverance in the life of perfection...renewals of resolutions which are brought to mind by some feast or event...

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...August, 1828: "...A ray of light seemed to pierce my soul, and I saw that it was obedience...

"From the beginning of the world, Our Savior has tried and tested His elect by obedience...which pickes out solid virtue from that which only seems such. As soon as man was created, the salvation of the universe depended on obedience. This virtue is so necessary, that God refused to dispense His creatures from it, even when they were in the state of innocence."

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Nov. 1, 1831: "It is quite natural that we should ask ourselves today which is the shortest road to heaven, the straightest and the surest. All the saints have answered with one voice that it is obedience. It is obedience which made their lives valuable and meritorious... as well as their varied methods of holiness."

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On Feb. 2 <1832> he wrote..."In the most exact obedience to the rules of the community, and the advice of a zealous director, we shall discover the means of suffering and offering a daily sacrifice to God..."

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At the end of the retreat in 1832, he wrote the following resolution in his book of rules..."I have read a great deal, reflected deeply and spoken at great length on obedience. Without it the human mind is seduced by deceptions and delusions, and strays into paths which are difficult, obscure and treacherous. Unhappy is the man who refuses to submit a lively and burning imagination, a clever wit, and a sensitive heart to the yoke of obedience.

"The obedient man, on the contrary, speaks only of victories; ...every action pleases God. He is in a manner, dispensed from

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rendering an account on the judgment day, for his superiors will render it for him...

"It is only in obedience that I find peace, security and happiness, and I ought to do all I can to obey...like my Divine Master...usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis. I must therefore obey my director, the rules of the community, all our superiors, and even all my confesors and every human creature...My great mortification should be to obey..."

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In 1841, the principal fruit of his retreat was the resolution to persevere courageously in practicing obedience in the most perfect manner, and he wrote down...points which he made the subject of his examen on this virtue...

"I must not be satisfied with obeying only in what is my duty. I must also endeavor to perform occasional acts of supererogation...I shall often speak of this virtue in my sermons, as also in my advice to the pupils and my younger confreres. I shall often ask God for the virtue of obedience..."

...<Father Tracol> considered that he owed special obedience to three principal authorities: the rules, his superiors and his director...

Nov. 22, 1827: "Two things seem to me to be essential in obeying the rules: namely, punctuality and a pure intention. The bell is the voice of God...It must... cause to fly instantly to the place whither duty calls us...This punctuality is the more meritorious since it is very rare and difficult. It takes many years to achieve success...

"As to a pure intention, it is sufficient to know that God sees us and knows the secret of our hearts...We can live a very regular life exteriorly, but unhappy are we if we have anything else in view but God...We must do nothing from purely natural motives, though they may be otherwise good. Everything must be raised to the supernatural, the spiritual order..."

At the time the above was written, there were very few priests in the parishes and frequent appeals were made to the professors of the College to come to the aid of their brethren on the mission and preach the word of God in the churches or religious communities. Father Tracol willingly accepted such invitations, but he did not wish them to interfere with the duties of his state... He wrote in his journal in December, 1827.

"Quomodo fiet istud? This must be my motto and my reply to others when I am

asked to do something which is against ...the duties of my state; or when I am requested to do certain work or practices of zeal for which I should be obliged to miss the community exercises and fail in the good example I should set by my punctuality. What good can come from zeal which is exercised at the expense of regularity?..."

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In 1832 Father Tracol wrote the following...reflections..."I must be exact in keeping our holy rules. The simplest rules make the greatest saints when we observe them with great purity of intention, punctuality and perseverance... When I cannot be at an exercise, I must unite my intentions with that of my confreres who are there, I must not avail myself of privileges except for good reasons..."

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On Jan. 1st, 1839, he made his meditation on obedience to the rule..."I shall be judged on the duties of my state, and therefore on the way I have kept our holy rules. These rules have been written by a man whose memory we venerate, and who represented the head of the diocese. Our constitutions have just been examined at Rome and our Institute declared praiseworthy. I ought, therefore, to observe both the spirit and the letter of the rule..."

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"Moderation in all things rather than absolute privation should be the fruit of this feast for my confreres and myself, if I do not mistake the spirit of our Institute. This is what we find in the observation of our rules... I have never yet had any perfect days in my life because there has perhaps been none in which I have not broken some rule."

* * *

<Father Tracol's> actions generally harmonized with his sentiments. He was ever the first to arrive in the community room. At the first sound of the bell, he stopped all work, and left all company, politely excusing himself... to go where the voice of God called him. He rightly observed the least commands of the rule..."

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1830, 1st Sunday of Advent: "In order to secure a favorable judgment at the last coming of the Savior, I must live in absolute obedience. This is a truth I should like to preach from the house tops, and repeat particularly to religious, and in general to all who aspire to perfection; for all species of holiness come from obedience. He who does not follow his own will, but that of God manifested through his superiors, who are its ordinary interpreters, can

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have nothing marked up against him if he never departs from the reasonable obedience of which the great apostle speaks; that is, obedience, which exhibits all the conditions which it ought to have..."

With such sentiments in his heart, Father Tracol did his best to make his obedience to the least wish of his superiors such as even the most perfect could desire: 1. Reasonable: that is, he was not afraid to tell his superiors whenever he believed he had good reasons for not doing a thing. 2. Absolute: that is, once he had given his reasons, he did what he was told without evasion or murmur, even though it sometimes seemed to be beyond his strength...

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In spite of...frequent...renewals of this virtue, <Father Tracol> was not successful in attaining to the ideal state of obedience which he desired. We discover this from many entries in his journal. For example, in June 1841, he writes: "In examining my own state, I have lately discovered that, in spite of resolutions to the contrary, I always find some reason for objecting or making some observations whenever my superiors give me something to do. Still, if I sometimes believe it necessary to say a word, I shall do it modestly, but I shall not insist..."

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This was his rule of conduct to the close of his life, and it was no slight merit to follow it exactly during the twenty years he was director of studies and secretary to the superior...

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An obedience which was, if possible, still dearer to the heart of <Father Tracol> than his obedience to the rule and his superior, was that to his director...

The two priests who succeeded one another as his directors...were Fathers Lapierre and Pagès Senior. These men understood and measured the generosity of the chosen soul which Our Savior had given into their hands that they might cultivate and develop it, make it grow and increase in virtue. Their zeal and prudence, aided by light and inspiration from on high and assisted by the docility and submission of their penitent... contributed largely to the spiritual advancement of their confrere...

Father Tracol had early understood the necessity of having a director, and of confiding in him with frankness and simplicity. We learn this from a lengthy meditation which he wrote in his journal on January 25th, 1829. Its subject was St. Paul and submission to being led.

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"Today, I ought naturally to ask myself what I can do for my own conversion, and to imitate the great apostle. I see that obedience was the first sacrifice which Our Savior demanded of him, and that, with the help of grace, he made it generously. Domine quid me facere? Et Dominus ad eum, Vade ad Ananiam. He did not hesitate for a moment to go to this charitable guide. He felt that the eyes of his soul were as blind as the eyes of his body, and that he could no more find his way among the paths of heaven, than he could in those of this world...If, at the critical moment, he had resisted the heavenly voice which called to him, if he had argued, struggled and not consented to make a perfect sacrifice of his own judgment and will, what would have become of him? If St. Paul had been the apostle of the gentiles, an apostle so powerful in word and deed, the light of all the churches, a man who was natched up to the third heaven, and a vessel of election, it was because he began by obedience, he accepted the advice of Ananias and thus learned what he had to do.

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This is a double lesson for us priests; we must lead and we must be led. But we must be led before we lead...We should treat our directors with docility and confidence...Our director speaks... We must obey without comment..."

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On Feb. 8th, two weeks later, he made a new meditation on this subject, and he has clearly and graphically described the state and sufferings of the scrupulous soul, and the necessity of having recourse to a director...

"Of all the means of calming a vivid and susceptible imagination there is none more prompt in the ordinary course of things, or more simple and efficacious, than obedience to one's director..."

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After showing the causes and the fatal consequences of scruples Father Tracol ...mentions some saints who suffered from an excess of imagination, such as St. Paul, St. Jerome, St. Augustine and St. Teresa, and then concludes... "It needed an Ananias to calm and direct the imagination of St. Paul. Hence we need a prudent and zealous director, who can give...rules from which, without very good reason, we may not swerve..."

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Father Tracol was so fearful of directing himself...that he consulted his director about many things which might seem childish...He often put the advice he received into writing. We have discovered two...books which he wrote be-

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tween 1825 and 1838...They contain a large number of questions which Father Tracol had asked and the answers of his director...

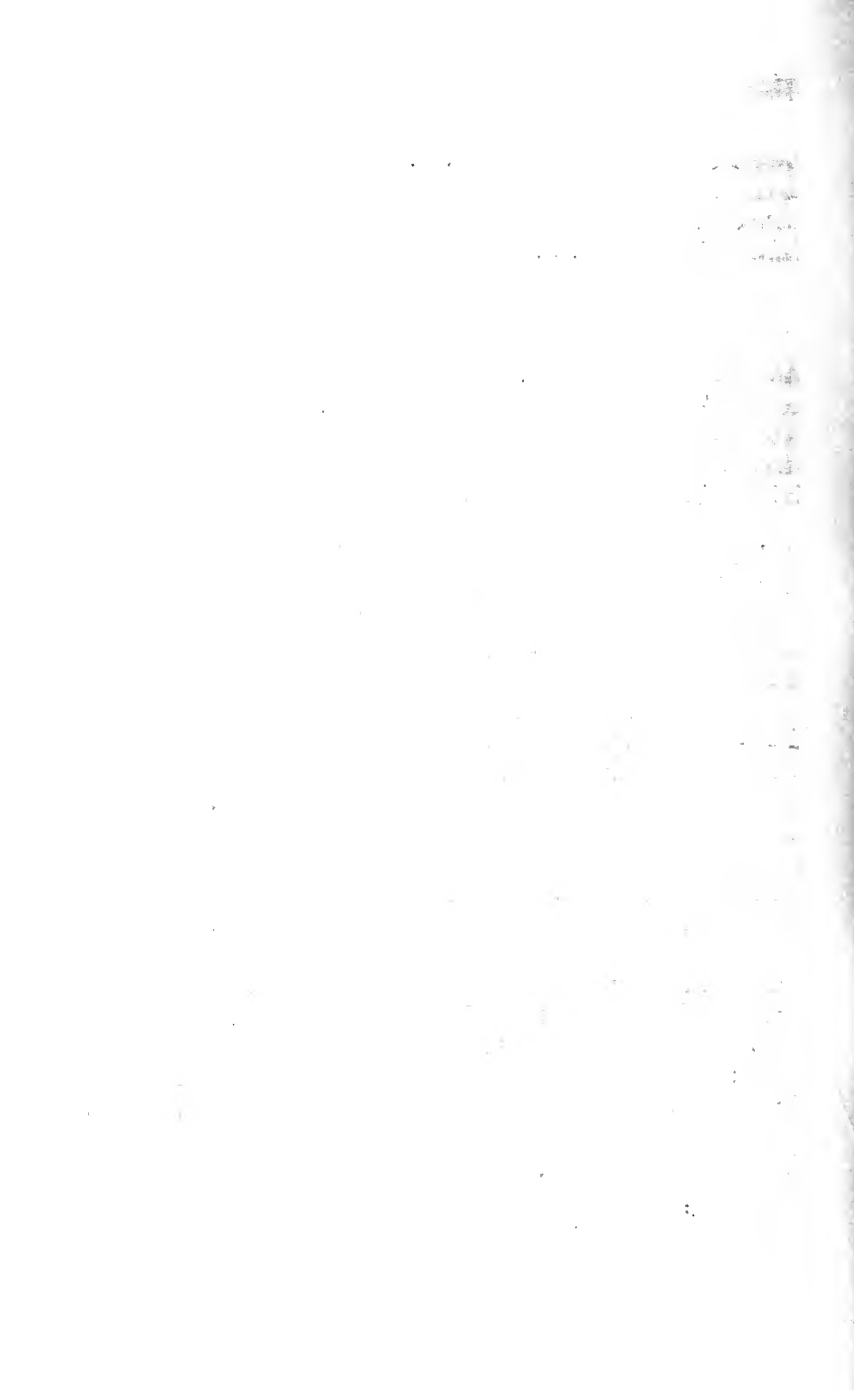
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As to walk days, he was told to go once a week to visit his family, and to take at least an hour's walk on Thursdays, unless he obtained a permission to spend his time otherwise.

"When they give me something special to eat in the refectory, shall I take it? Would it not be better to refuse? How ought I particularly to mortify myself at table?" His director answered: "To refuse would make your exterior mortifications too apparent, especially were you to refuse several of the things which are given to the community. It is not necessary to take such food as does not agree with you; but mortify your taste a little, and take care, of course, that you are not noticed."

He asked his director's advice, not only on subjects for private reading, meditation and examen, but also on the special prayers he wished to offer, the indulgences he most wished to gain, etc.

In acting thus, he was truly under the direct, constant and immediate pressure of obedience; and his attachment to the

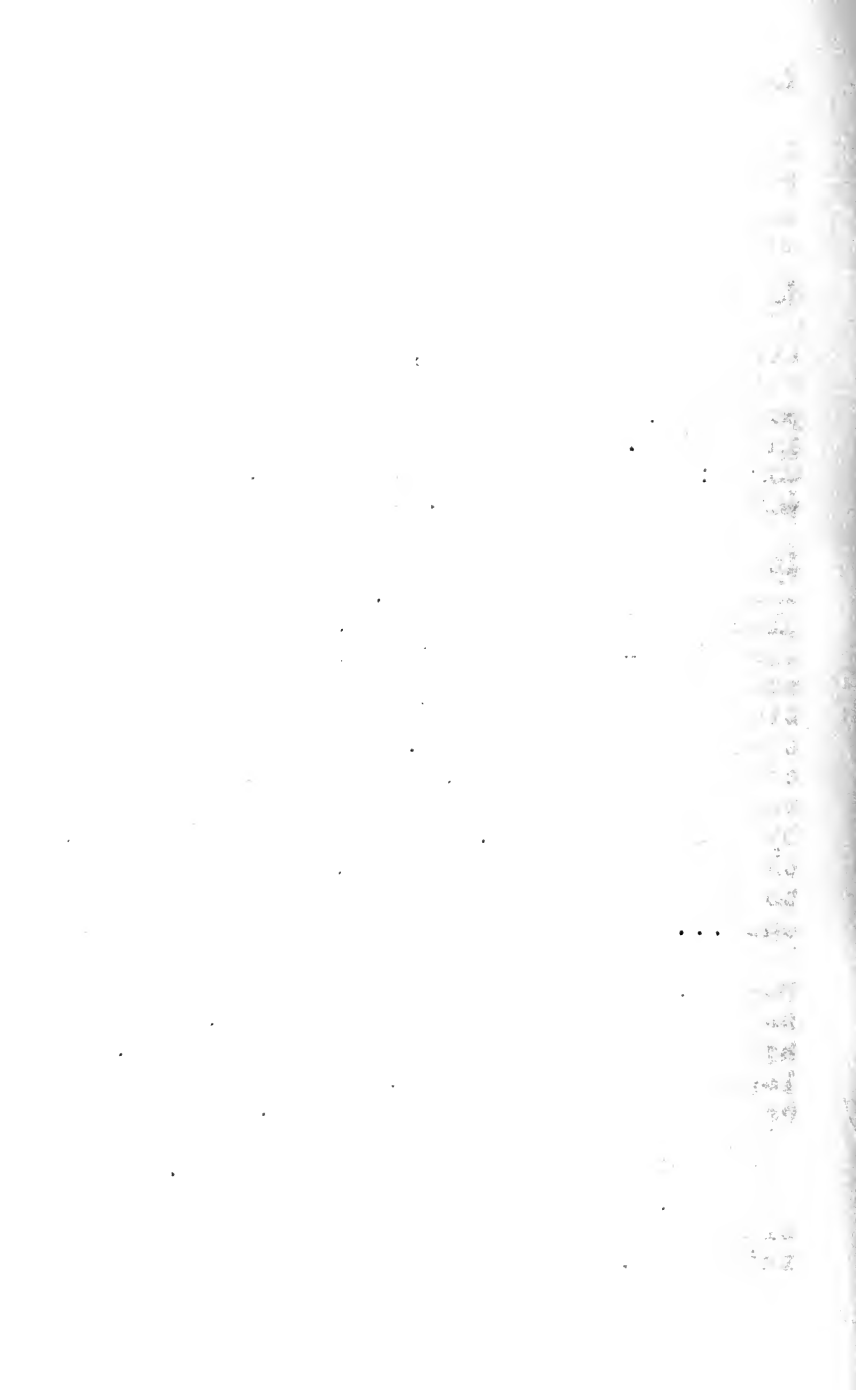


rules, his fidelity in carrying out the wishes of his superiors, and his submission to the advice of his director, are convincing proofs of his spirit of obedience. This was his preparation and first step in the complete abandonment of self into the hands of God, a state to which he aspired, as the consummation and perfection of all obedience and the highest form of happiness here below.

THE LAST YEARS OF HIS LIFE

We have now only to render an account of the last twenty-five years of the life of Father Tracol, which passed still more uniformly, if that were possible, than the years of his youth and prime. We may sum them up in four words: the hidden life, prayer, patience and self-abandonment...

At the time of the death of the venerable Father Tourvieille, which took place during August, 1859, Father Tracol was sixty-three years old, and he was now so frail and sickly that for some time past he could scarcely do the work that was given to him. It was a great consolation for him, therefore, when he was relieved of the office of secretary by Father Actorie. The new superior was, thanks to his good health, quite able to take charge of all his correspondence...When the chapter was established, he proposed to make Father Tracol a member, as the representative of the confreres who had not taken vows, but had remained members of the community, through their promises, and on account of their previous connections. It has since been doubted whether this election was strictly regular and canonical. However, no one questioned it at the time and Father Tracol was elected un-animously.



His ministry at his beloved House of Providence was also nearing its end, and from October 16, 1859, he limited himself to a monthly conference on the religious life, a service which he ceased altogether on November 24, 1861.

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For many years after this he took charge of the library, the sacristy and the religious ceremonies at the college... He was assisted in this last employment by the younger confreres, who did the more difficult work for him...He also continued to preach to the pupils, examined the classes every three months, and rendered other little services which his superiors and confreres might ask of him until the end of the scholastic year 1866-67. At this time, or during the next year, he left the college where he had spent almost sixty years of his life as pupil and professor, and retired to a little room in the college of St. Barbe where he spent the last twenty years of his life.

During this last period of his existence he was entirely free to practice the hidden life, the life of prayer, recollection and self-abandonment which he had so long desired...

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We shall now give extracts from some letters written by Father Tracol...to

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the confrere whom he had chosen as his director after the death of his venerable and saintly friend, the elder Father Pagès, in 1860.

Oct. 5th, 1864: "Rev. and Dear Confrere — For some days I have had the intention of sending you a few lines, but you know that my poor head will not always permit me to do what I desire...I have great need to remember what you told me about self-abandonment and to meditate on the example you set me in this matter...I hope you will manage to keep your promise and spend a few days here at the end of the month, and that you will give me a few hours of that time..."

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Some days later, he wrote another letter ... "It is impossible for me to live away from you, for I cannot accustom myself to your absence...Your encouragement would be so useful in helping me to bear this cross which weighs on me all the heavier as I approach the last day. I have so many things to tell you, so much advice to ask.

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"I am still often deprived of the consolation of saying Mass, and I need not tell you how much I feel this trial. But I must profit by this, as by other miseries, and entrench myself in that holy

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self-abandonment which ought to be my constant virtue, in practice even more than in theory...We are going to celebrate a great and beautiful feast, and I hope I shall not be so unfortunate as to be obliged to forego the happiness of saying Mass."

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September, 1863: "Feast of the Seven Dolors. I begin by telling you that I have made my retreat alone, as my poor head, which demands so much attention, and my deafness condemn me to an isolation which is not altogether contrary to my taste; and now it is Saturday, the end of the retreat...It is a great privation which God had imposed upon me not to have you with me for two consecutive years during retreats...In this, as in all other things, I must adore the designs of God and abandon myself to them with love...

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This correspondence lasted for ten years and is remarkable for the same character of perfect obedience, holy fears and resignation to the will of God...

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Jan. 8 <1869> ...Our presence in the house is always of some use...There is always some advantage either for our-

selves or for others, when we are at hand, and this is a reason why we should not separate ourselves from the rest of the community without necessity.

"A means of avoiding a great deal of distraction and restless-self examination, is to do away with useless, or too prolonged conversations.

"We consider it fortunate when we can get over a journey quickly. Railroads, steamers, nothing is too swift when we wish to reach the end of the trip. We are travellers in this world, and we ought to rejoice when the end of the journey has come, when we find ourselves before the door of eternity. This desire of getting home to our country is an excellent disposition for being well received..."

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We might say that the last fifteen years of <Father Tracol's> life were one long martyrdom... When he retired to St. Barbe in 1866 or 1867, he was still able to follow the community exercises for four or five years, and even to climb up to the Convent of the Sacred Heart where they kept a room for him. This was the ordinary direction of his walks and one of his greatest satisfactions; but his waning strength obliged him to give it up almost entirely, and to content himself with walking up and down in the courtyard of St. Barbe. A still more

painful privation which the state of his health more and more frequently imposed upon him, was his inability to offer up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass...It happened most frequently in winter, so that in 1869...he asked permission to say Mass in winter at an altar which had been erected in the sacristy. This was granted and renewed the next year...

...About 1875, his strength vanished to such an extent that he could no longer put on the sacred vestments alone, and had great difficulty in saying Mass. On August 15th, 1876, he made a supreme effort to approach the altar... and this was his last Mass.

For still another year, he was able to receive Holy Communion from time to time but a day came when even this consolation was denied him, for his extreme weakness would not allow him to fast until morning...His director...thought it his duty to ask Mgr. Bonnet for the privilege of giving the venerable invalid Holy Communion every week by way of Viaticum.

The Bishop answered as follows: "I thank you for having called my attention to your venerable confrere. Tell Father Tracol for me that I permit him to communicate by way of Viaticum once a week and twice when there is a solemn feast during the week. Recommend me to the prayers of this holy religious, and assure him of my affectionate veneration."

+ Frederick, Bp. of Viviers.

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On January 9, 1878, he wrote his director another letter...

"My Dear Confrere and Most Charitable Friend,

"The time has come for me to ask your blessing for the New Year. I should have done so before, if the least thing were not so painful to a man of my age and ever increasing infirmity.

"They have been good enough to dispense me from the office, and this is another privation added to the rest. I am glad, however, to tell you, that I received the Holy Viaticum in my room on the feast of the Epiphany. Ask God to grant me this grace often, and give me your advice so that I may profit by it. This New Year's gift of prayers and advice, which I expect from you, will not be denied me, I hope: and you know that I have never required them so much as now. Have you felt the cold this winter? For my part, I no longer go to the chapel, even on Sundays. Ask for me the spirit of recollection and prayer, and a loving abandonment of self into the hands of Providence..."

When he was deprived of those spiritual joys which he derived from the recitation of the office, he applied himself to his other exercises with more fidel-

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ity and order than ever. From the summer of 1875, he had for his nurse, one of the Sisters of the House of Providence, called Sister Lucy. For ten years, she looked after him with the greatest charity and care, she read to him when the pain in his head or his diminishing sight prevented him from doing this for himself. Thanks to the devotion of this good nun, he could always make his meditation and examen, read two or three chapters of St. Paul, and some pages of the treatise on Holy Abandonment by Father Caussade, and say his beads and other prayers. His weakness and suffering were very great when he dispensed himself from them, or rather, was obliged by his nurse to omit them whenever she thought it absolutely necessary...

Guided by the spirit of piety and obedience, he made frequent acts of patience, resignation and self-abandonment to the holy will of God. He was generally calm, serene and amiable in the midst of his sufferings, and still took a lively interest in all that concerned the community and his confreres. He was exceedingly grateful for little attentions, he received his confreres with the greatest pleasantness and thanked them sincerely for the visits which he enjoyed very much. These visits formed a bond, so to speak, between him and the rest of the community, from which he was in some way separated by ...his health...

Although the oldest member of the community, he was destined to survive such dear friends as Father Charmant, Mr. Raynaud and Father Soulerin. These deaths grieved him profoundly, though, if we judged by appearances, they left him indifferent...This was not selfishness, but the practice of that holy abandonment into the hands of God which he renewed...several times a day. Still, egotism and nature began to show in his conduct, according as his physical and intellectual faculties declined. Loss of strength told upon his will, and it was not always able to overcome nature ...This resulted in bad temper and impatience when everything did not go according to his desires, or when they could not immediately supply his needs for the little caprices of sickness and age. But if we may believe his faithful nurse, these cases were exceedingly rare...

His mind became weaker and weaker with his physical powers, and towards the end of 1883, one might have believed that his wonderful intelligence was altogether gone, if, from time to time, it did not break through the torpidity in which old age had enveloped it. At these times he astonished his visitors by his wonderful memory, his quickness, his kindness of welcome, and his gratitude towards such as rendered him any service. Thus on May 25, 1885, he received a visit from Mgr. Robert, Bishop of Marseilles, one of his old pupils.

Father Tracol's mind was quite free, and he was extremely sensible of this proof of delicate and affectionate attachment, and tender regard. This was, however, his last joy on earth, for on June 3rd, 1885, only a few days after this visit, he peacefully breathed forth his soul to God.

Two days later, a number of his old pupils and all the priests of the town, met at the college, to bring to his last home one who had been the master of their young dyas, and who had certainly been for us one of the most beautiful models of the priestly and religious life.

On the day of the funeral, there appeared in the paper, called L'Annonèen, a funeral notice which...is the exact opinion of the public and the faithful echo of the judgment passed...by all who had the happiness to know him.

"We have just heard of the death of Father Tracol, a member of the Community of St. Basil. A saint is dead. No one who has had the happiness of approaching this venerable priest will attempt to criticize or deny this."

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